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WILLIAM PITT

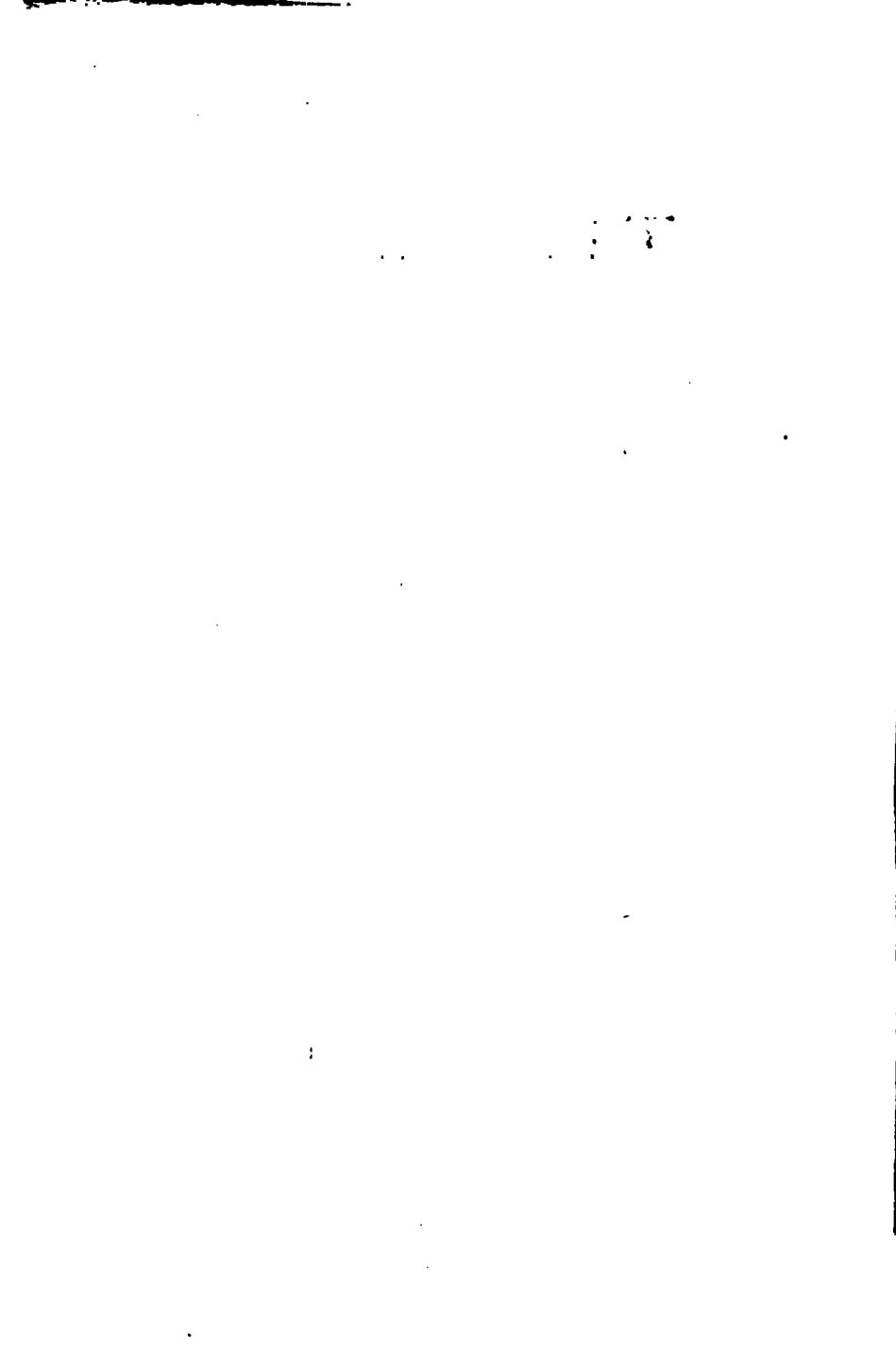




From a Painting

by Henry Edridge, A.R.A.

WILLIAM PITT THE YOUNGER.





WILLIAM PITT

BY

CHARLES WHIBLEY

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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WILLIAM PITT.



CHAPTER I.

THE TRIUMPH OF YOUTH.

It may be accepted as a general truth that the statesman, like the poet, is born and not made. When Wolsey left Ipswich for Oxford, he had neither thought nor prospect of governing his country and his king. It was native genius, not training, which placed Oliver Cromwell at the head of affairs; and Chatham himself was a cornet of horse before he found his true career in politics. But William Pitt the

Younger was made as well as born a Minister. From his earliest childhood he was educated to achieve a certain end, to fulfil a definite purpose. His natural gifts for literature and politics were assiduously encouraged by his ambitious father, who was determined that his favourite son should be well fitted to hold the highest office, whenever the opportunity should arrive. Born in 1759, that year of stress and glory, which saw the triumph of our English arms in Canada, which boasted the victories of Clive and Coote in India, which witnessed the splendid achievement of Hawke in Quiberon Bay, William Pitt grew up an ardent, acquisitive boy, in an atmosphere of learning and patriotism. Not even ill-health availed to check his progress, and he gained so easy a mastery over Greek and Latin that, in the words of his

earliest tutor, "he never seemed to learn, but only to recollect."

The method which his father persuaded him to follow in his studies was far in advance of his time. He read the classics, not as exercises in philology, but as examples of the greatest poetry and the loftiest eloquence; and the epics and histories of old were as real to him, from his youth upwards, as they were to Montaigne. But in his father's eyes it was not enough for the boy to understand Virgil and Thucydides; he must use their works as a means to acquire readiness of speech and a quick faculty of selection in his own tongue; and Lord Chatham would urge him to turn passages from whatever book he was studying into English, without premeditation. That he might learn to declaim, he was set to recite pages

from Milton and Shakespeare; and, when yet a child, he was trained to act upon the stage of the drawing-room, though all the training in the world could never endue him with his father's histrionic talent.

It is not strange, therefore, that his first, and almost his only, experiment in literature was a tragedy in five acts, called "*Laurentius, King of Clarinium*"; nor was he content to write it—he also played a part and spoke the prologue. The earliest attempts of great men to express themselves in words are not infrequently prophetic of their careers. The essay which Napoleon wrote at school is an eloquent denunciation of ambition, "a violent, unreflecting madness"; and Pitt's play, composed when he was thirteen years of age, seems to have been written with an eye fixed in-

tently upon the future. "The tragedy is bad, of course," said Lord Macaulay, who was fortunate enough to have seen it, "but not worse than the tragedies of Hayley. It is still preserved at Chevening, and is in some respects highly curious. There is no love. The whole plot is political; and it is remarkable that the interest, such as it is, turns on a contest about a regency. On one side is a faithful servant of the Crown; on the other an ambitious and unprincipled conspirator. At length the King, who had been missing, reappears, resumes his power, and rewards the faithful defender of his rights. A reader who should judge only by internal evidence, would have no hesitation in pronouncing that the play was written by some Pittite poetaster, at the time of the rejoicing for the recovery of George the Third

in 1789." In a brief fifteen years Pitt was asked to enact the same play in grim earnest, and it is among the strangest ironies of history that he thus rehearsed in sport a most difficult crisis of his life.

William Pitt was never a boy, but, had he been, the stern instruction of his father would surely have checked the careless rapture of boyhood. It seems to have been part of Chatham's design to treat him always as a grown man. When he was no more than eleven we find Chatham sending him a letter by Junius, "as a specimen of oratory"; and with the same purpose he recommended him to study the works of Barrow, a copious author by whose example the father was far better fitted by nature to profit than the son. It is not remarkable, therefore, that when Pitt was entered at Pembroke Hall in

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1773,¹ he was superior in wisdom and attainments to the most of his older contemporaries. A child in years, he was already a man in judgment, and prepared to take advantage of all the scholarship which the University could afford. What manner of boy he was his father has himself set down in a letter addressed to Mr Turner, senior tutor of Pembroke Hall, which in no way exaggerates Pitt's marvellous qualities. It is dated at Burton Pynsent, October 3, 1773, and thus it runs:

"SIR,—Apprehensions of gout, about this Season, forbid my undertaking a journey to

¹ Thus the entry stands in the *Admissiones apud Coll. Pemb. 1616-1797*:

"Honorabilis Gulielmus Pitt nobilissimi Dni Dni Comitum de Chatham Filius ~~natus~~ secundus natus apud — 28 Maij 1759 anno aetatis suae decimo quarto nondum completo admissus est ad Mensam Sociorum sub Tutoribus Magr^{is} May et Bell.

"Apr^{is} 26, 1773."

Cambridge with my Son. I regret this more particularly, as it deprives me of an occasion of being introduced to your Personal Acquaintance, and that of the Gentlemen of your Society; a loss I shall much wish to repair, at some other time. Mr Wilson, whose admirable Instruction and affectionate Care have brought my Son, early, to receive such further advantages, as he cannot fail to find, under your eye, will present Him to you. He is of a tender Age, and of a health, not yet firm enough to be indulged, to the full, in the strong desire he has, to acquire useful knowledge. An ingenuous mind and docility of temper will, I know, render him conformable to your Discipline, in all points. Too young for the irregularities of a man, I trust he will not, on the other hand, prove troublesome by the Puerile sallies of a Boy. Such as he is, I am happy to place him at Pembroke; and I need not say, how much of his Parents' Hearts goes along with him.

"I am, with great esteem and regard, Sir,
your most faithful and most obedient humble
Servant,

CHATHAM."

"Such as he is," says his father; and

he was such as no other boy was before or since has been. Precocity in the arts, which are nourished at the fire of genius, is less uncommon than in those pursuits whose success demands study and patience. We are not surprised that Pope lisped in numbers; we confess our amazement that Rancé should have published an edition of Anacreon at twelve years of age. Pitt's achievement resembles Rancé's more nearly than Pope's. At fourteen he was already something of a scholar, and very much of a politician. During the seven years which he spent at Cambridge, he devoted himself to the study of the Classics with an ardour which not even ill-health could abate. He read everything in Greek or Latin that he could lay hands upon, and he translated Lycophron at first sight with an ease, says Pretyman, "which, if I

had not witnessed it, I should have thought beyond the compass of human intellect." The only encouragement that ever he needed was an encouragement to idleness, and this his father gave him in his own magniloquent style. "All you want at present," wrote he, "is quiet; with this, if your ardour *ἀπιστεύειν* can be kept in till you are stronger, you will make noise enough. How happy the task, my noble, amiable boy, to caution you only against pursuing too much all those liberal and praiseworthy things, to which less happy natures are perpetually to be spurred and driven! . . . You have time to spare; consider there is but the *Encyclopædia*, and when you have mastered all that, what will remain? You will want, like Alexander, another world to conquer." It was not long, indeed, before he wanted this other

world, and he found it, where his father had bade him seek, in politics.

But it was not merely for their own sakes that Pitt devoted himself to the study of Greek and Latin. In his time the Classics were regarded as the highway to intelligence. The historians and orators of Athens and Rome were wisely thought to contain the best inspiration for the modern politician, and, since no speech was perfect without a classical quotation, Virgil and Horace were added to the statesman's library. In the latter half of the eighteenth century few men rose to eminence in Parliament who were not deeply tinctured with learning. The third Duke of Grafton found a yet better solace in the Classics than in the society of Nancy Parsons. Fox beguiled the enforced leisure of opposition by reading Porson's editions of Euripides' "Orestes"

and "Hecuba." Our universities knew no more elegant or more finely polished scholar than Lord Mornington.¹ And William Pitt was in no way inferior to the best of his contemporaries. Yet party spirit, eager to conceal the truth, has declared that he was ill-versed in Greek and Latin. The evidence on the other side is overwhelming, and the libel may fittingly be refuted here. "Lord Grenville (himself an excellent Grecian) has often told me," wrote Wellesley to Croker, "that he considered Mr Pitt to be the best Greek scholar (not professional) of his time. Mr Pitt was perfect master of Demosthenes, of whose orations I have re-

¹ Among the papers preserved at Dropmore is a letter from Lord Mornington to William Grenville, perfectly characteristic of the men and the time. "I am glad you have returned to Latin and Greek," writes Mornington. "I hope when I come to London to form some plan with you in that way which may be pleasant and serviceable to us both."

peatedly heard him recite whole pages, dwelling on all the grand bursts of thunder and lightning." Pretymán, whose testimony on such a point is above suspicion, is in perfect agreement with Wellesley. He tells us that Pitt had an intuitive quickness in the interpretation of difficult passages. "I am persuaded," said he, "if a play of Menander or Æschylus, or an ode of Pindar, had been suddenly found, he would have understood it as soon as any professed scholar." That which his friends assert receives an efficient corroboration from his own speeches; and though the exigent demands of practical life perforce diminished Pitt's interest in literature, he carried away from Cambridge a better knowledge of Greek and Latin than belonged to many whose scholarship was their career, and he could meet even such redoubtable

opponents as Charles James Fox upon their own ground.

Meanwhile he had taken his degree, *jure natalium*, when he was seventeen; he had learned as much civil law as Cambridge had to teach; and he had hardened his wits against the craggy philosophy of John Locke. Nor had his amusements been less strenuous than his duties. At the outset youth and ill-health had excluded him from the society of the place, and even if games had then been fashionable he would not have joined in them. He wished no more than his father wished him to play the part of the young barbarian. "Chambers, Hall, and tufted Robe continued to please" him, because they gave him the training best suited to his temperament. He had been at Pembroke Hall but a few days when his father in a letter struck the true note

of his character. "How happy, my loved boy, is it," wrote Lord Chatham in his superb, magisterial way, "that your mamma and I can tell ourselves there is at Cambridge *one* without a beard, 'and all the elements so mixed in him, that Nature might stand up and say, This is a man.'" And a man he was, for all his few years,—a man in dignity and erudition.

Once only do we find evidence of a boyish escapade. A pompous reference in a letter of his father's suggests that even Pitt could unbend on occasion. "Whose fences have you broken?" asks Chatham; "and in what lord of the manor's pound have any *strays of science* been found since the famous adventure of catching the horses with such admirable address and alacrity?" Alas, the adventure is no longer famous, and we know not what the *strays of*

science were. But it is clear that Pitt was once guilty of some childish prank, and it is easy to understand even his father's austere satisfaction at the breach of discipline. For the rest, as has been said, his amusements were strenuous. His favourite recreation was to visit the Houses of Parliament and to listen to the debates. It was on one of his excursions to the House of Lords that he first met Fox, whom he astonished by explaining through the whole sitting how best the speeches on either side could be answered.

But it was to his father that he listened with the greatest admiration. "His first speech lasted an hour," he wrote to his mother in 1775, "and the second half an hour—surely the two finest speeches that ever were made before, unless by himself!" And he was present in the House when

Chatham made his last speech of defiance. He heard the noble peroration of a noble career: "Shall this great kingdom now fall prostrate before the House of Bourbon? If we must fall, let us fall like men!" He supported his father with Mahon's help as he stumbled from the House, and never did he waver in his allegiance to Chatham's illustrious memory. The first act of his public life was to vindicate his father's honour in the public prints. Not long before the statesman's death a couple of busybodies had attempted to patch up a friendship between Chatham and Bute. But Chatham would hear nothing of the negotiation, boldly declaring that while Bute had "brought the king and kingdom to ruin," he "would sincerely endeavour to save it." After Chatham's death in 1778, the story was repeated,

and it fell to Pitt to deny in his driest and most lucid style that Chatham was ever "looking out for a negotiation with Lord Bute," or that he would under any circumstances have served with him. The debate was admirably conducted, and is a sufficient proof that Pitt, young as he was, had already a firm hold upon the principles of political controversy.

Thus when he came to London in 1780 he was admirably equipped for the career which he had chosen. An excellent scholar, as we have seen, he was also an alert politician, trained in the best school by his father's precept and example. Truly his birthright of statesmanship had been improved by careful husbandry, and his energy and confidence were ready for any strain put upon them. But he was in no sense a prig. It pleased his opponents

in after years to jeer at him as "immaculate," to pretend that he spent his time in a miserable isolation. And, as when they declared he was no scholar, so when they denounced him for a prig, they had in their mind a comparison with Charles James Fox. That Pitt never descended to the dissipation which allured Fox is true enough, and though it is not for us to play the censor, it may be admitted without pedantry that his health and his purse were all the better for his caution. It is the old story of the industrious and the idle apprentice, and the idle Fox inevitably shines with a brighter lustre than the industrious Pitt. Fox,¹ as his panegyrist

¹ It was at Almack's in Pall Mall that Fox's most daring feats at play were accomplished, and the history of manners can hardly show us a stranger picture than that drawn by Horace Walpole of Fox and his brother gamesters. "They began by pulling off their embroidered clothes," says Walpole, "and put on frieze greatcoats, or turned their coats inside

confesses, was "dissolute, dissipated, idle beyond measure." One day he lost many thousands at Newmarket; he sat up the whole night drinking at Hochevel; and he had not been to bed when he came down to the House to move an important bill. "This," cries Lord John Russell with a proper enthusiasm, "was genius, was almost inspiration." So it was, but it was not the only sort of genius, and it is foolish to blame Pitt because he could not take his pleasures as boisterously as did the most distinguished of his political opponents.

outwards for luck. They put on pieces of leather (such as are worn by footmen when they clean the knives) to save their laced ruffles; and to guard their eyes from the light and to prevent tumbling their hair, wore high-crowned straw hats with broad brims and adorned with flowers and ribbons; masks to conceal their emotions when they played at quinzé." The high spirits necessary for performing such antics are admirable, and it must be admitted sorrowfully that Pitt was never young enough to know them.

And, while in his youth Pitt knew not the splendored recklessness of Fox, the cares of state soon made it impossible that he should devote himself either to scholarship or to dissipation with the zest and ardour of his rival. Moreover, his early career may appear less interesting than it was, because a perfect adaptation of means to an end, and an instant success in an arduous profession, do not wear the likeness of romance. But that he was joyous, lively, and affable in society there is no doubt. During the last years of his life at Cambridge he had formed many friendships, none of which were broken when he came to London; and he met his friends Eliot, Wilberforce, Bankes, Pepper Arden, and many others at Goosetree's,¹ a club which presently

¹ This fact has persuaded Lord Holland to declare that Pitt "kept a faro-bank at Goosetree's." Of

assumed no small political importance. Here he learned to gamble, and, we are told, "the vehemence with which he was animated was very great." It was indeed this very vehemence which made him desist from play, for he feared a growing interest, and knew well that there were more serious things in the world than games of chance.

But his energy and high spirits were remarkable enough. He entered with tireless zest into the duties and pleasures of London. He could at last find pleasure in the practical jokes which were denied to his childhood. "One morning," says Wilberforce, "we found the fruits of Pitt's early rising in the careful sowing of the garden-beds course there is no truth in the statement, but it is a clear proof of prejudice. Not content with calling him a prig, the Whigs must prove him a gambler also, even at the risk of contradicting themselves.

with the fragments of a dress hat, with which Ryder had over-night come down from the opera." And George Selwyn, whose standard of manners and of gaiety was as high as that of any of his contemporaries, who had lived in the company of wits for nearly half a century, bears irrefutable testimony to his lightness of heart. "When I left the House," wrote he, "I left in one room a party of young men who made me, from their life and spirits, wish for one night to be twenty. There was a table full of them, drinking—young Pitt, Lord Euston, Berkeley, North, &c., &c., singing and laughing *à gorge déployée*; some of them sang very good catches; one Wilberforce, a Member of Parliament, sang the best."

So Pitt spent the first year of his life in London, like many another young barrister, between Westminster Hall and

the West End. Zealous in the profession which he was destined so soon to desert, he loitered many days in the expectation of a brief, and on circuit won the highest opinions of his colleagues. Now we hear of him going to a masquerade, and finishing the evening at the Pantheon, "which I had never seen illuminated, and which is really a glorious scene." Now he takes part in a supper, given to celebrate Shakespeare's memory, at the Boar's Head in Eastcheap, at which "many professed wits were present, but Pitt was the most amusing of the party, and the readiest and most apt in the required allusions." However, in a few months began his political career, which henceforth deprived him of leisure, and wore him out by the time that he was forty-five. Rejected by the University of Cambridge, he was returned towards

the end of 1780 for Sir James Lowther's borough of Appleby, and from that time his life belonged not to himself but to his country.

It is a curious fact that William Pitt, whose name for so many years stood for England in the courts of Europe, crossed the Channel but once. It was not for him to make the grand tour, like so many of his idler contemporaries, or to improve by foreign travel the excellent qualities of his mind. The only country that ever he saw, save his own, was France; and in that country, afterwards his bitterest antagonist, he passed but six brief weeks in the autumn of 1783. In company with Eliot and Wilberforce he visited Rheims, dined with the Cardinal de Perigord, made the acquaintance of Talleyrand, and discussed English politics with the Abbé de la

Garde. Thence they went to Paris, saw the Court at Fontainebleau, paid their respects to King and Queen, conversed with Mr Franklin, and duly admired the pompous simplicity of M. le Marquis de la Fayette. Though Pitt's imperfect knowledge of French "prevented his doing justice to his sentiments," we are assured that "he was yet able to give some impression of his superior powers—his language, so far as it did extend, being remarkable for its propriety and purity." But by far the strangest result of Pitt's journey was a suggestion made by Mr Walpole to Lord Camden, "that, if Mr Pitt should be disposed to offer his hand to Mademoiselle Necker, afterwards Madame de Staël, such was the respect entertained for him by M. and Madame Necker, that he had no doubt the proposal would

be accepted.”¹ Pitt, of course, declined the honour, to the manifest advantage of himself and of his country. Such a marriage would have turned the course of history. France was not large enough to hold both Napoleon and Madame de Staël, and how, with the author of ‘*Corinne*’ at his side, could Pitt have championed successfully the cause of England? The journey to France, however, was an interlude. As Pitt had surrendered literature to the claims of politics, so he renounced the pleasures of foreign travel. Henceforth it was his business to wage war or to make peace upon the Continent, not to visit it; and even the charms of Mademoiselle Necker were

¹ This story has been dismissed by Lord Stanhope and others as ridiculous. But it is given in Wilberforce’s ‘*Sketch of Pitt*’ without a word of doubt, and nobody was in a better position than Wilberforce to test its truth.

soon forgotten in the bustle of affairs.

When Pitt in January 1781 took his seat in the House of Commons, the political outlook was black enough to appal the stoutest patriot. England was at war with France, Spain, and Holland. The American colonies were independent in all except name. At the head of affairs was an amiable gentleman "in a blue ribbon," whose devotion to his King was far greater than his ability to combat his King's enemies. Lord George Germaine, who had displayed as little talent in the council as on the battlefield, was a Secretary of State. The old parties were replaced by small groups, none of which could act independently of all the others. Fox, North, and Shelburne, each had his following. What England needed was a single-minded

statesman, who would combine the discordant elements of Parliament, and face the country's enemies abroad. The coming of Pitt, therefore, was watched with more than ordinary interest, and he had not been a member of the House for more than a month when, in response to a universal cry, "Mr Pitt! Mr Pitt!" he made his first speech. The imperious wish of the House to hear him was proof enough of the respect which his appearance inspired. If he was not a member of a ruling house, he was something yet greater: he was the son of the Great Commoner, who had saved England from ruin and brought two empires beneath her sway. But, as the tall, gaunt youth, sharp-nosed and small-chinned, rose to address the House, he was heard no less for his own than for his father's sake. His reputation was al-

ready as high as his courage, and all men expected success, though few foresaw the marvellous triumph which he achieved. Truly the day, the 26th of February 1781, will always be glorious in the annals of Parliament, since it began the career of one of the greatest Ministers that ever held the reins of government.

The occasion was the debate on Mr Burke's Bill for the Regulation of the Civil List, and Pitt's speech was received with a chorus of enthusiastic applause.¹ Before what seemed his genius the dissension of parties was hushed. Whigs and Tories, the parti-

¹ Even that uninspired compilation, 'The Parliamentary History,' takes a lofty flight, when it considers this first effort of William Pitt. "His voice is rich and striking," it says, "full of melody and force; his manner easy and elegant; his language beautiful and luxuriant. He gave in this first essay a specimen of eloquence not unworthy the son of his immortal parent."

sans of peace and war, combined to honour the youthful statesman. North proved his magnanimity by declaring it the best first speech he had ever heard. "He is a chip of the old block," said one; "he is the old block itself," retorted Burke. Anthony Storer told Lord Carlisle that in the whole course of the speech "there was not a word or a look which one would have wished to correct." Pitt's own account was more modest. "I heard my own voice yesterday," he wrote to his mother. ". . . All I can say is that I was able to execute in some measure what I intended, and that I have at least every reason to be happy beyond measure in the reception I met with." When we turn to the speech itself, disappointment is inevitable. The orator's art is as fleeting as the actor's. A speech, composed for the ear, too often makes

but a cold impression upon the eye, and the meagre report that we have of Pitt's first speech hardly justifies the applause of his contemporaries. But the credit which it gave him was confirmed by his next two essays, and henceforth Pitt was one of the few that King, people, and Parliament were equally bound to consult.

It is characteristic of him that the subjects which thus early engrossed his attention were retrenchment, peace, and reform. With all the enthusiasm of youth he hoped to fill the public treasury, and to reduce the influence of the Crown,—“an influence,” said he, “which was more to be dreaded, because more secret in its attacks and more concealed in its operation than the power of prerogative.” He thought no object could be “so fair, so probable, or so flattering” as economy. At the same time,

he would jealously guard the right of the Commons' House of Parliament to hold the strings of the national purse, and to correct the expenditure of the public money; but with a yet greater zeal than that wherewith he advocated economy, he pleaded for the cessation of the war. In doing this, he was not merely pleading a cause in which he devoutly believed; he was also defending the memory of his father from the assaults of his enemies. He attacked the war both in its inception and in its conduct, and the subject gave him a far better chance for emphasis and invective than the somewhat arid topic of finance. He belaboured North and his colleagues with all the energy of youth, and with the added authority which his relationship with Chatham gave him. A noble lord had called the war a holy war. Pitt did not

agree with him: "he was persuaded and would affirm that it was a most accursed, wicked, barbarous, cruel, unnatural, and diabolical war." Thus, with the exuberance of his twenty-one years, he accumulated his epithets and increased his scorn. Nor was this the sum of his vituperation. The war, said he, "was conceived in injustice; it was matured and brought forth in folly; its footsteps were marked with blood, slaughter, persecution, and devastation; in truth, everything which went to constitute moral depravity and human turpitude were found in it." The language was the language of his father, which he was presently to abandon for a drier and more practical style. But his father would not have approved his unmeasured argument in favour of peace. Though Chatham had denounced the war at the outset, though

he had deplored the miserable conduct of its aimless campaigns, he would not readily have made terms in consequence of defeat. "If we must fall," he would have said again, "let us fall like men."

Pitt's mind, however, was made up. Day after day he assailed "the lord in the blue ribbon" with increasing ferocity, and there is no doubt that the fall of North's Ministry was brought about by his untiring eloquence. He knew neither pity nor fatigue, and since his time only two politicians—Disraeli and Lord Randolph Churchill—have caught a breath of his careless frenzy in attack. Thus he put the question in its simplest form: "Will you change your Ministers and keep the empire, or keep your Ministers and lose the kingdom?" But while he was resolved that the Government should resign, there was no taint of

selfishness in his resolution. He neither wished nor hoped to gain any advantage for himself. He would only accept such an office as he knew was out of his reach. In a speech delivered five days before Lord North's resignation—the most arrogant speech ever delivered by a man of twenty-two—he made his intention perfectly clear. "With regard to a new administration," he said, "it was not for him to say, nor for that House to pronounce, who was to form it; all he felt himself obliged to declare was, that he himself could not expect to take any share in a new administration, and were his doing so more within his reach, he would never accept a subordinate position." It is no wonder that George Selwyn was astonished at his independence. "Young Pitt will not be subordinate," he wrote; "he is

not so in his own society; he is at the head of a dozen young people, and it is a corps separate from Charles's; so there is another premier at the starting-post." But Pitt's arrogant insubordination was justified, and the corps, separate from Charles's, was strong enough to keep Charles out of office, with the exception of a brief interlude, for more than twenty years.

In the last speech, which he delivered against Lord North, he rose to a height of political sagacity that hitherto he had not touched. He spoke in support of a motion for withdrawing the confidence of Parliament from the present Ministers. The orator thanked God that an end would soon be put to a worthless administration, and he trusted the House would not contaminate their own purpose by suffering the present Ministers to nominate their successors.

Then came the peroration, which has had more influence on the followers of Pitt than many of his more famous speeches. "He most strenuously recommended the motion," said he, "as the only way of presenting to the eyes of the world what he had read of with rapture, but almost despaired of seeing—a patriot king presiding over a united people." The reference to Bolingbroke was eagerly caught up. From Pitt to Canning, from Canning to Disraeli, this hope of the patriot king presiding over a united people has been handed piously onward, and nothing better, in thought or phrase, can be set before the Tories of to-day.

To the lord in the blue ribbon there succeeded Lord Rockingham, and Pitt, true to his profession, refused the Treasurership of Ireland, though it carried with it light duties and five thousand

a-year. Holding no office, he was free to express his own opinions and to follow his own judgment. It is not surprising, therefore, to find him advocating a reform of the boroughs, shorter parliaments, and no bribery. But he handled the question of reform in no spirit of radicalism. He did not desire to change but to restore the constitution, whose very vestiges he revered; his aim was to remove certain defects, which had grown with the years, and not to lay a sacrilegious hand upon excellences which all patriots admired. And he certainly made out a very good case for reform. He declared that the representatives who sat in the House of Commons had ceased to be connected with the people. There were some boroughs that were mere appanages of the Treasury; there were others that had no existence save in

the members whom they sent to Westminster; there were yet others "in the lofty possession of English freedom," that claimed the right to bring their votes to market. Those last were the most dangerous of all, and seven of them had been knocked down to the Nabob of Arcot as to the highest bidder.

It needed no eloquence to prove that a great country should not expose itself thus to the risk of foreign interference; and so clear was Pitt's argument, so sound his demand for a return to first principles, that he all but carried the House with him. His proposal for a Committee of Inquiry was rejected only by twenty votes: and thus, as early as 1782, England was not far from the attainment of parliamentary reform. But the reform which Pitt advocated was different, both in form and substance, from that which was accepted

after years of agitation in 1832. It was not his purpose to transfer political power from one class to another. He did not claim that the people had a divine right to govern by virtue of its ignorance, and he no more wished to extend the franchise than to make this party or that "the rulers for life" of an unwilling country. However, his suggestion, supported by Fox and opposed by Burke, was not accepted by the House, and never again did Pitt have the opportunity of passing a measure of whose justice he was firmly convinced.

In July 1782 Lord Rockingham died, and the Government which he had attempted to control fell to pieces. Lord Shelburne became Prime Minister; Fox laid the foundation of his subsequent unpopularity by declining to serve under him; and William Pitt, a few

weeks after his twenty-third birthday, was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. Never before in the annals of the country had so young a man been admitted to the Cabinet, and friends and foes expressed an equal surprise. Although he had sat two years in the House, although he had distinguished himself as well in conduct as in debate, he was still looked upon as a freak of nature. Men discussed the infant statesman very much as at a later date they talked of the Young Roscius. Even Lord Mornington was appalled at the bold experiment. "We are all thrown into the utmost consternation," he wrote to W. Grenville on July 12, "by the apparent confusion in the British Cabinet; at this time instability of counsels will be absolute destruction. W. Pitt, Secretary of State! And Lord Shelburne,

Premier! Surely the first cannot be qualified for such an office, and the last is, in my opinion, little to be depended on." The wits of the Opposition made merry at the expense of Pitt's youth. "Billy's too young to drive us," sang Captain Morris, to the delight of Brooks's. Burke's heavy-footed pleasantry suggested nothing better than that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had no need of a barber. Fox, who had once been a prodigy himself, thought it worth while to laugh at Pitt's years; and Sheridan, stung to anger by a reference to his plays, declared that "if ever again he engaged in the compositions alluded to, he might be tempted to an act of presumption to attempt an improvement on one of Ben Jonson's best characters—the character of the Angry Boy in the 'Alchemist.'"

Pitt, doubtless annoyed by the repetition of a jest that had never been worth making, was driven at last to an apology, which did more credit to his dignity than to his sense of humour. "The calamity under which he chiefly laboured," said he, "was his youth,—a calamity which he could not sufficiently lament, as it had been made the subject of animadversion by the hon. gentlemen on the other side. His youth," he allowed, "was very exceptional to that situation, yet he trusted that the system of his conduct, and his strict discharge of the duties of his high office, would in a great measure make away with what he felt himself to be an objection." No apology was necessary. In a few months the House and the country had forgotten that Pitt carried on his shoulders so light a load of years, and Temple himself, seldom

enthusiastic where Pitt was concerned, "could not conceive a substitute for him."

And to read the speeches delivered by Pitt while he was Chancellor of the Exchequer is to understand the perfect confidence reposed in him. Though Townshend was technically leader of the Commons, he cheerfully delegated his duties to Pitt, who met and routed single-handed the combined forces of the multifarious Opposition led by Fox, Burke, and Sheridan. Their attack, it need hardly be said, was factious and unscrupulous. They jested, they raved, they ranted, and to no purpose. Pitt met them without fear, and repelled them without favour. Nothing is more remarkable in the debates of 1782-83 than Pitt's lofty superiority to all considerations of party or interest. Where England is concerned he can be neither

flippant nor light-hearted. Contrast his tone with the tone of his rivals, and you may measure the distance between patriotism and display. First, there was Burke, drunk with rhetoric, exulting in his purple passages, making phrases for their own sake, and laughing in his ponderous way at the efforts of the Government to make an honourable peace. Then there was Fox, variable and unprincipled, bent on nothing more than a momentary advantage, happy if only he could shine in debate, and hear his words received with approving hilarity by his faithful henchmen. Lastly, there was Sheridan, following his leaders with amiable obedience, and thinking the country well lost if the last quip came easily from his tongue.

Pitt, on the other hand, was as high above vanity as above intrigue. His one object was the conclusion of a last-

ing peace with all the Powers, and he was not deterred by the factious Opposition. None knew better than he that Fox's vehemence was inspired by his dislike not of measures but of men. "It is not the treaty," said he, "but Lord Shelburne that the Opposition hopes to wound." Most of all, he was intolerant of a levity which could find a jest in the discomfiture of the country. Boy as he was, he rebuked the leaders of the other side with a severity which should have shamed them. "The present was a moment for seriousness," said he in answer to Burke, "not for mirth." And so he rose to bring back the House to sobriety and seriousness. He told his opponents that "this was neither a fit time nor a proper subject for the exhibition of a gaudy fancy or the wanton blandishments of theatrical enchantment: it was their

duty and business to break the magician's wand and to dispel the cloud, beautiful as it was, which had been thrown over their heads, and consider very seriously the perilous situation of the country." But the perilous situation of the country was not of supreme interest to Fox and his friends, who merely proposed to hold office, not to save England.

During the months of Lord Shelburne's Ministry, indeed, Pitt fought the battle of the whole Cabinet with a tireless energy and superb confidence, and made on February 21, 1783, the finest speech of his life. Even as we read it, this survey of England's decline, this enforced confession of England's weakness, this bold assurance that only in a wise peace could England's salvation be found, quickens our pulse and arouses our enthusiasm. In a single

sentence he brushes aside the disingenuous arguments of angry partisans. He places the sober and durable triumphs of reason above the weak and profligate inconsistencies of party violence. "I will never engage in political enmities," says he, with an eye upon Fox, "without a public cause; I will never forego such enmities without the public approbation, nor will I be questioned and cast off in the face of this House by one virtuous and dissatisfied friend." And so, having dismissed the personal question, he proceeded to paint in dismal colours the state of the Empire. He discovered the fabric of our naval supremacy to be "visionary and baseless." He declared that the army was in yet worse case; that no new levies could be torn from the depopulated country; that "3000 men were the utmost force

that could have been safely sent from this country on any offensive duty."

Nor was this all. He pointed sorrowfully to an unfunded debt of thirty millions, exclusive of the annual services, and asked how the Ministers, "thus surrounded with scenes of ruin, could affect to dictate terms of peace." There was nothing to console him but a retrospect. "I feel," said he, in a memorable passage—"I feel at this instant how much I had been animated in my childhood by a recital of England's victories. I was taught, sir, by one whose memory I shall ever revere, that at the close of a war far different from this she had dictated the terms of peace to submissive nations. This, in which I place something more than a common interest, was the memorable era of England's glory. But the era is past; she is under the awful and mortifying

necessity of employing a language which corresponds with her true condition : the visions of her power and pre-eminence are passed away." But none knew better than Pitt that the evil was not irreparable. If the era of glory was past for the moment, it would come again. Peace and repose might bring back—and did bring back—the greatness which once was England's. And if we could not dictate the terms of peace, we might at least accept such terms as were dignified and honourable. If there was cause for regret, there was no need for despair. "Let us feel our calamities," said Pitt; "let us bear them, too, like men."

With the loyalty which he ever showed to his colleagues, Pitt passed to a panegyric of Lord Shelburne,—a panegyric all the more effective because it was sincerely moderate and

honestly tempered to the occasion ; and then in a famous passage he denounced the threatened coalition. "If the baneful alliance is not already formed," said he, "if this ill-omened marriage is not already solemnised, I know a just and lawful impediment, and, in the name of the public safety, I forbid the banns." For himself he was at the disposal of the House, with whose decision he was ready to comply. "You may take from me, sir," said he, in his immortal peroration, "the privileges and emoluments of place, but you cannot and shall not take from me those habitual and warm regards for the prosperity of Great Britain which constitute the honour, the happiness, the pride of my life, and which, I trust, death alone can extinguish. And, with this consolation, the loss of power and the loss of fortune, though I affect not to despise

them, I hope I shall soon be able to forget.

“‘Laudo manentem ; si celeres quatit
Pennas, resigno quæ dedit, . . .
. probamque
Pauperiem sine dote quæro.’”

“Why,” asked a young politician of Bishop Tomline, “did he omit ‘et mea Virtute me involvo’?” And the bishop had no difficulty in ascribing the omission to Mr Pitt’s modesty and good sense.

Though Pitt made many a speech in later days which carried heavier weight and re-echoed with louder applause, he never showed a better statesmanship or expressed it in finer diction than on this day in February 1783. But it availed him and his friends nothing. The forces of dissension were as strong in the lobby as they were deaf in argument. Fox had no principles to enforce,

no policy to support, but he would have none of Shelburne. Though he might have joined the Government without outraging his opinions, for he, too, was a champion of peace, he had refused the overtures which had been made him. Pitt, in fact, had done his best to bring Fox into the Cabinet. "It is impossible for me," Fox had replied, "to belong to any administration of which Lord Shelburne is head." "Then we need discuss the matter no further," retorted Pitt; "I did not come here to betray my leader." And that was the last time that the two rivals ever exchanged words in private.

The reason of Shelburne's failure is to be sought in his lack of sympathy. Of his ability there is no more doubt than there was then of his zeal in the public service. He held office to make a peace, of whose wisdom the whole House was

convinced, with the exception of North and a few of his friends. But Fox and Burke were prepared to enter into an alliance with their ancient enemy rather than keep Shelburne in power. Their nefarious compact was not at once successful. At Shelburne's resignation there was a general effort to break the coalition and to exclude Fox. Temple thought that the King's friends might combine under Thurlow and leave Lord North to his new allies, though his own inclinations "went warmly to support and to join with Pitt." Shelburne and the King were of the same opinion as Temple, while Dundas was first in the field as the champion of his friend. He lost no time in suggesting Pitt's name to Shelburne, who on February 24 laid it before George III. The King received it eagerly, and instantly offered Pitt the Premiership. The youth

of twenty-three was not carried away by the splendour of the proposal. With the practical judgment which always distinguished him, he deferred his decision. On February 25 Dundas told his brother that he had been with Pitt all last night and all the morning, and was hopeful that on the morrow Pitt would announce himself Minister. But two days later Pitt's mind was made up in the other sense. Though he hesitated to decline the call of his friends, he could not rely upon the aid or forbearance of Lord North. The aid, if given, would be precarious; but above all, said he, "in point of honour to my own feelings, I cannot form an administration trusting to the hope that it will be supported, or even will not be opposed, by Lord North." And thus, to the bitter disappointment of the King and his friends, Pitt refused the highest

office in the State before he had reached his twenty-fourth birthday.

After Pitt's refusal there was nothing left for the King but to accept the advice of the Coalition. The Duke of Portland, appointed Prime Minister, was a mere tool in the hands of Lord North and Fox, the two Secretaries of State. The alliance, of which Pitt had forbidden the banns, was thus formed, and the history of English politics cannot show a more discreditable episode. Nor did the alliance turn out to the profit of the newly-cemented friendship. In politics, as in other professions, dishonesty is generally fitted with the punishment it deserves, and the conduct of Fox and North was too flagrant for palliation. North made the best of a bad job, and confessed that while Fox had proved a formidable enemy he had an implicit trust in his loyalty.

In defence of Fox there is nothing to say. He had for years attacked his new colleague with all his brilliant talent for vituperation. He had prayed that the Ministers should hear of the calamities of the American War at the tribunal of justice and expiate them on the public scaffold. A brief year before he entered into an unholy alliance with North, he had declared that if he made terms with any of the Ministers he would rest satisfied to be called the most infamous of men. "He would not for an instant," said he with rotund voice and ample gesture, "think of a coalition with men who, in every public and private transaction as Ministers, had showed themselves void of any principle of honour and honesty. In the hands of such men he would not trust his honour for a minute."

A year had passed, and he had played the confidence trick. He had trusted his honour to Lord North and taken Lord North's in exchange; and, as far as honour went, neither had gained or lost by the bargain. But the alliance was the political ruin of both. From this moment Fox's marvellous popularity began to decline. The people could not believe in the patriotism of one who turned an enemy into a friend, not for the salvation of the country, but for the mere sake of a capricious ambition. Henceforth it was idle for him to prate of liberty or to vaunt the economy which he did not practise. He had lost the confidence of the people, and he never regained it. Pitt summed up his offence in four lines. "Because," said he, "Mr Fox is prevented from prosecuting the noble lord in the blue ribbon to the satisfac-

tion of public justice, he will heartily embrace him as his friend."

The Coalition, confident in its strength if not in its union, at once determined upon a bold measure. It risked its life upon the hazard of a bill, which was to settle once and for always the affairs of India. Drafted by Burke, introduced with masterly eloquence by Fox, it possessed all the qualities promised by its parentage. It was bold, it was original, it was far-reaching. It proposed, in defiance of all existing charters, to place the control of India in the hands of an irresponsible commission, which was to hold office for four years and was to be independent of changing Ministers or parliamentary dissolutions. At the first introduction of the bill the commissioners were not named, but from the outset there was no doubt that they would be one and

all the sworn supporters of the Secretary of State. The objection to the bill was twofold. In the first place, it demolished the charters, which had been granted to the Company, without apology or compensation; for the whole House did not answer the Attorney-General's famous question as he would have it answered. "What is a charter?" he asked, and replied himself, "Only a skin of parchment with a seal of wax dangling at one end of it." In the second place, it secured to Mr Fox and his friends an amount of patronage which was a serious danger to the State. No wonder Pitt, in writing to the Duke of Rutland, described it as the boldest and most unconstitutional measure ever attempted. No wonder Lord Thurlow declared that if the bill was passed it would no longer be worthy of a man of honour to wear the crown. "The

King," said he, with pardonable exaggeration, "will, in fact, take the diadem from his own head and place it on the head of Mr Fox."

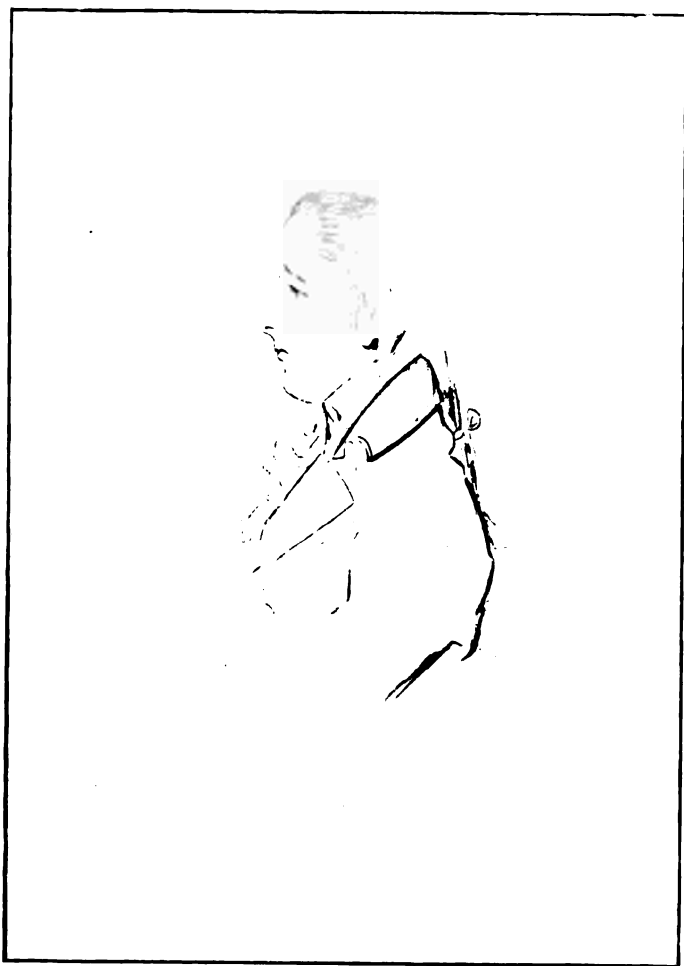
The issue was clear from the first. Fox, on the one side, was fighting for patronage, Pitt, on the other, for the constitution, and the energy and bitterness of the previous session were repeated. Fox, exultant in his majorities, spoke more eloquently even than he had spoken in opposition. Pitt, in defending the rights and liberties of mankind, in deploring an accession of influence which could not fail to render the Ministers who wielded it a danger to the State, had an easier task than any he had hitherto attempted. Burke and Fox, moderate at the outset, grew in violence as the debate proceeded, and the cold assurance wherewith Pitt assailed them did not mitigate their

anger. For once, also, the caricatures fought upon the right side, and Sayer's famous picture of "Carlo Khan's triumphal entry into Leadenhall Street" was not without its effect.

But wit and logic battled in vain against the solid majorities of the Coalition. The bill was passed, despite the efforts of Pitt, and was sent up in confidence to the House of Lords. The Peers, heedless of patronage and bitterly hostile to the unnatural alliance of Fox and North, threw out the bill, and Lord Temple, to make the certainty of defeat still surer, obtained his Majesty's authority to say "that whoever voted for the India Bill was not only not his friend, but would be considered by him as an enemy." This unconstitutional use of the King's influence aroused a storm of indignation in the House of Commons. Resolutions were moved and

passed condemning "a breach of the fundamental privileges of Parliament." Fox found comfort in a bitter attack upon his rival, and infamously charged him with the basest intrigue. "Boys without judgment," said he, "without experience suggested by a knowledge of the world, or the amiable decencies of a sound mind, may follow the headlong course of ambition thus precipitately, and vault into the seat while the reins of government are placed in other hands. But the Minister who can bear to act such a dishonourable part, and the country which suffers it, will be natural plagues and curses to each other."

The invective was excellent, but it overshot the mark. Pitt had already given ample proof that he was not the slave of ambition, and he was too sternly opposed to the influence of the



From a Drawing

WILLIAM PITT.

by Lawrence.

crown to be honestly charged with complicity in Lord Temple's design. Meanwhile the Lords were obdurate, and Fox vowed that he would never resign. For a week the deadlock continued, until — on December 18 — North and Fox were peremptorily bidden to deliver their seals of office to the King, who at once invited Pitt to form a government. Thus at twenty-four William Pitt abundantly justified his father's training. The Minister born had also been made, and his rapid success is the more wonderful, because it was achieved in a profession in which senators of sixty are still accounted young. To be entrusted with the government of a country at an age when most men are just beginning the education of practical life is a triumph indeed. But Pitt achieved a greater triumph still when

some months before he had deliberately refused the offered prize. It is the natural impulse of sanguine youth to grasp the forelock of opportunity. And only he who has an heroic confidence in himself and in the future dares to stay his hand at the dictate of prudence.

CHAPTER II.

PEACE AND ECONOMY.

WHEN, on the 19th of December, Mr R. P. Arden moved a new writ for the borough of Appleby, "in the room of the Rt. Hon. W. Pitt, who since his election has accepted the office of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer," he was received with an outburst of loud laughter. The hilarity was not unnatural. The task which Pitt essayed might well have seemed impossible even to less violent critics than the friends of the Coalition. Fox made no attempt to conceal his

exultation, and candidly believed that nothing was needed to wreck the Government but a few weeks of office. "Well," said Mrs Crewe to Wilberforce, "Mr Pitt may do what he likes during the holidays, but it will only be a mince-pie administration." A far abler judge of affairs took the same view. "Depend upon it," said Gibbon, "Billy's painted galley must soon sink under Charles's black collier." But Pitt was as little dismayed by ridicule as by opposition, and he faced the difficult problem of controlling a hostile House of Commons with a patient courage which the fiercest attacks were powerless to diminish.

Lord Macaulay, in a prejudiced essay, has declared that "Pitt was emphatically the man of parliamentary government, the type of his class, the minion, the child—the spoiled child—of the

House of Commons." It was in similar terms that in later years Disraeli eulogised Sir Robert Peel, to whom the praise far more justly belongs than to William Pitt. If Macaulay's statement be true, it is only half the truth, and there is no doubt that Macaulay made it merely to insist upon what he believed were Pitt's limitations. That Pitt was a great Member of Parliament may be admitted. That he was solely, or even chiefly, a Member of Parliament cannot for a moment be sustained. None knew better than he that the control of the Commons' House was a means to an end: he never mistook it for an end in itself. It was his ambition to govern the country, not the country's representatives; and no sooner was his position secure than he revealed himself far more a man of action than a man of speech. But

during the first three months of his supremacy it was his business to master the instrument which was to serve him. Had he died in March 1784 he would have been freely entitled to Macaulay's malicious eulogy. He was compelled by the force of circumstances to become an adept in all the artifices of parliamentary government. He rivalled Sir Robert Peel in playing upon the House of Commons like an old fiddle, and his performance was more skilful than Sir Robert's, because its difficulty was greater.

To form a government at all, he was obliged to overcome such obstacles as would have appalled any one less resolute than this Prime Minister of twenty-four. His father's followers not unnaturally stood aloof from an adventure of which they could not foresee the end, while his own friends were still too

young to impress the House with the weight of their authority. Lord Camden did not accept office until after the dissolution ; and when the Duke of Grafton, who at the outset had refused the Privy Seal, was willing to help, no place could be found for him. But the heaviest blow which Pitt sustained was the sudden defection of his kinsman, Lord Temple, who held office as Secretary of State for a single day. "This was the only event," says Tomline, "of a public nature which I ever knew disturb Mr Pitt's rest while he continued in good health." Many reasons have been given for Lord Temple's disloyalty, but no one who has read the correspondence of that peevish and ambitious man will hesitate to see in it the result of disappointed vanity. Now, Temple was not disposed to underrate the services he rendered to his country. He had

been Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, he had done his best to throw out Fox's India Bill, and he remained Lord Temple. The dukedom for which he prayed until the end of his life was not granted him, and he deserted Pitt in a passion of frustrated hope. But Pitt after a sleepless night returned to his task, and by December the 23rd Wilberforce could write "Pitt nobly firm, Cabinet formed."

Though the first obstacle was thus overcome, many others remained. The Prime Minister was confronted not merely by the eloquence of Fox, Burke, and Sheridan, but by a solidly adverse majority in the House of Commons. The strength of his own party lay in the House of Lords, and even there he was not safe from Thurlow's treachery. Meanwhile he was compelled, as before, to fight the battle of the Commons single-handed. His younger followers,

zealous as they showed themselves, were not yet equal to the contest. Powys described them without exaggeration or malice as "a bodyguard composed of light-going troops, who shot their little arrows with amazing dexterity against those who refused to swear allegiance to their chief." Nor were the skill and majority of his opponents the only difficulties which barred Pitt's progress. He had come into office not without an undeserved odium. Though it was evident that he took no part in Temple's intrigue with the King, it was easy for Fox and the rest to charge him with complicity, and it needed all his dignity to repel the charge. On January 10, 1784, he declared that "he came up no backstairs; that when he was sent for by his sovereign to know whether he would accept of office, he necessarily went to the royal closet; that he knew

of no secret influence, and that his own integrity would be his guardian against that danger, but the House might rest assured, whenever he discovered any, he would not stay a moment longer in office."

And thus he remained strong in the consciousness of his own integrity. The taunts of the Opposition neither disturbed his equanimity nor roused him to an intemperate reply. When charged with holding himself superior to the House of Commons, he wisely thought a defence unnecessary, and again and again sat silent when clamorously called upon to speak. The India Bill, which he was bound in honour to introduce, was thrown out. Addresses were presented to the King praying him to remove Pitt and his colleagues. But, in spite of adverse votes, the Minister held his position, confident in the support of

George III. and "perfectly satisfied that the sense of the people was in his favour." Though he was always ready to strengthen his Cabinet, if that could be honourably achieved, he indignantly declined the terms of the gentlemen who met at the St Alban's Tavern, and demanded his resignation as the preliminary of their support. "The *independents*," he wrote to the Duke of Rutland in February 1784, "are still indefatigable for coalition, but as ineffectual as ever."

Meanwhile he increased in popularity as Fox declined, and by a happy chance he was permitted openly to prove his perfect disinterestedness. He had not long been in office when the Clerkship of the Pells, a sinecure worth £3000 a-year, fell vacant. Pitt, a barrister without resources, and with every prospect of leaving office on the morrow,

might have accepted it without scruple ; but, true to the lofty unselfishness which guided him throughout his career, he conferred the post upon Colonel Barré, on condition that he should resign a pension which Lord Rockingham had granted. In this act of self-sacrifice there was neither pose nor pretence. Pitt followed the dictates of his heart and conscience with perfect simplicity. For him politics was a trust, not a profession, and he served his country without expecting the reward of money or honour. But what to him was the natural expression of a lofty mind took hold of the people's imagination, and henceforth his bitterest opponent could not charge him with greed or self-interest. The popularity which his honesty of purpose had won him was increased by an accident. Returning from the city, which had conferred its

freedom upon him, he was attacked in St James's Street by an armed mob. Who was guilty of the outrage was not discovered, but the most of men shared the King's suspicion that it was committed under the "auspices of Brooks's." If that were so, the friends of Fox defeated their own purpose: in his own despite Pitt wore for the moment the aspect of a hero; and the crown was not yet lifted from his brow when a few weeks later came the dissolution.

Three months had been spent in idle talk. The Opposition had been as violent as it was useless, and Pitt, by overcoming his many difficulties, had given the country the best measure of his talents. He had shown himself as skilful a leader as the House had ever known; the vast majority which returned to support him in Westminster proved how largely he was trusted by

the people; and the number of "Fox's martyrs" eloquently testified to the discredit into which that leader had fallen. For the next nine years Pitt devoted himself to the peaceful administration of the Empire, and he managed all things with a tact and skill which raised him high above the level of a mere parliamentary triumph. He reorganised the finances of the kingdom; in India, as at home, he proved himself a constructive statesman; he would have given the wisest relief to Ireland, had it not been for a factious Opposition; he made a sound commercial treaty with France; and he settled the question of the Regency with a firmness and wisdom which made the selfish scheming of the Whigs appear yet more disgraceful. His policy was as courageous abroad as it was prudent at home; the nation might boast a full treasury and the respect of

its neighbours; and it was to Pitt and to Pitt alone that it owed the many advantages which had so long eluded it. Yet in spite of these achievements Macaulay declares that "legislation and administration were with Pitt secondary matters," and that "he gave only the leavings of his time and the dregs of his fine intellect" to the true work of a statesman!

When once his majority was assured him, he lost no time in passing the India Bill, which the previous Parliament had rejected. He laid down at the outset the sound principle that "a charter ought never to be invaded, except when the public safety called for its alteration"; and so far was he from trespassing upon the privileges of the Company, that he framed his measure with its aid and approval. His purpose being "to connect the constitution

of the Company with the national interests," he instituted a Board of Control, which, consisting of Privy Councillors, should involve no expense, and yet should be a sufficient check upon the rulers of India. At the same time, he insisted that patronage should not be in the hands of the Government, and thus the risks, inseparable from Fox's plan, would be avoided.¹ The

¹ It is interesting to note Warren Hastings' opinion of the India Bill. "I have seen Mr Pitt's Bill," he writes to Scott. "Its Substance is Mortality, nor can any Amendment extract the Poison which pervades all its Parts, and constitutes its essence." To his wife he writes in yet stronger terms: "An Act more injurious to his [Scott's] fellow Servants, to my Character and Authority, to the Company, to the Proprietors, who alone have a Right to my Services on the Principle of Gratitude, and to the national Honor, could not have been devised though Fifty Burkes, Foxes, and Francises had clubbed to invent One." Time has fought on the side of Pitt, and demonstrated that his Bill, while it did no injustice to the Company, increased the responsibility and strengthened the control of the mother-country.

Bill was marked, in Lord Salisbury's phrase, by "a sort of prosaic sagacity." There were many reasons why it should have failed; but it would not have been Pitt's had it not been practically adapted to its end, and it held its place triumphantly until 1858.

But the difficulties of India were not finished with the passing of the Bill. In 1785 Warren Hastings returned to England with all the honour which belonged to the saviour of India. He was received with due pomp at Court, and recognised by Dundas as one who had nobly served his country. After a while, however, there were heard murmurings of dissatisfaction. The malice of Francis, and the careless rhetoric of Burke, involved Hastings in charges of cruelty and peculation; nor was his cause advanced by the over-zealous advocacy of Major Scott. At

the outset Pitt took a reasonable view of the question. He refused to discuss the conduct of the Rohilla War, and the friends of Hastings believed an impeachment impossible. But when, some days afterwards, Fox charged Hastings with exacting a severe and exorbitant fine from Cheyte Sing, Zemindar of Benares, Pitt, to the surprise of the whole House, spoke and voted against the Governor of Bengal. The surprise was the greater, because at the beginning of his speech Pitt appeared to support the victim of Fox's attack. He declared, like a wise man, that he felt "the greatest difficulty and uneasiness in being obliged to determine on judicial questions, the merits of which were so closely connected with Indian principles and habits; and that under the insurmountable impression of sentiments and feelings imbibed and matured under the

British Constitution." He deplored the temper of Burke and the malignancy of Francis. He proved, from a wide survey of feudal institutions, that Hastings was perfectly justified in demanding the services, personal or commuted, of Cheyte Sing, and then censured his conduct, because "the fine which he determined to levy was beyond all proportion exorbitant, unjust, and tyrannical."

Thus by a sudden turn of the argument the impeachment of Hastings became inevitable, and a dishonour, comparable only to the reckless attack upon Clive, was put upon our administration of India. That Pitt behaved with less than his usual firmness and insight cannot be denied. For once in his career he overlooked the essence of the case, and perplexed his judgment with the details. There was a far larger question involved than the misdemean-

ours of Warren Hastings. Even had that great man been guilty,—and many years afterwards he was acquitted on all counts,—he was still entitled to the highest consideration. Lofty services are not thus lightly counterbalanced, and, if Hastings had been “exorbitant and tyrannical,” he had vastly increased our empire without enriching himself. Moreover, the circumstances of the impeachment should at once have aroused a suspicion in the mind of a statesman. Francis was its instigator, and Francis, always an implacable enemy, knew no scruple of truth or honour in his treatment of Hastings.¹ Burke,

¹ Francis' levity was no less disgraceful than his malice. “Mr Hastings, I am well informed,”—thus he writes in exultation to Mackenzie in April 1786,—“is sunk into the lowest state of misery and disjunction.” And some months later he described the suffering of his enemy, whom he once hoped to replace and whom he had met on the field of honour, with a kind of jauntiness. “The prosecution of your

whose enthusiastic mind thought ever in superlatives, had no difficulty in picturing a great public servant as a master of iniquity and oppression, while for Fox and Sheridan Warren Hastings was as good a chance for attack as another. Yet, though Burke surpassed himself in intemperance of language, though Sheridan shook the House with what many admirable judges believed

friend Hastings," he told Shee, "will be revived with a renewal of vigour as soon as Parliament meets. He has had a pleasant summer of it. An attempt will also be made to impeach Sir Elijah Impey, in whose fate I know you are interested. Let the event to their persons be what it may, the charges will gibbet their characters to all eternity." How men deceive themselves! When, twenty-seven years after the attack made upon him by Francis and the rest, Warren Hastings stood as a witness at the bar of the Commons, the House "received him with acclamations, asked a chair to be set for him, and when he retired rose and uncovered." And on the gibbet that is placed at this cross-road of history there hangs not the great statesman, but the little politician whose malignancy poisoned the eloquent tongues of Sheridan and Burke.

to be the most eloquent speech ever delivered, few pretended then, and nobody pretends now, that they spoke the truth. Hastings may have offended against the stern code of English policy. To achieve a great end he may have done a little wrong. But he belonged to a small garrison, set down in a vast and hostile country, and none knew better than he that severity was the best weapon wherewith to safeguard the garrison.

Nor did anything which he had done justify the excesses of Fox and Burke and Sheridan; and it is fortunate for their reputation that the criminal exaggeration of their speeches is forgotten, and that little is left save the general impression of eloquence cunningly conveyed by Macaulay. At the same time, it would be absurd to impute to Pitt, as many have done, a dishonourable

motive. To believe that he was stirred by any other influence than the simple love of justice is grievously to misread his character, and the discussion cannot be better summed up than in the words of George III. "Mr Pitt," wrote the King on June 14, 1786, "would have conducted himself very unlike what my mind ever expects of him if, as he thinks Mr Hastings' conduct towards the Rajah was too severe, he had not taken the part he did, though it made him coincide with the adverse party. As to myself, I own I do not think it possible in that country to carry on business with the same moderation that is suitable to an European civilised nation." There spoke a shrewd and kindly man, whose political opinions did not blind him to the honesty of a disinterested Minister.

But a far more difficult task awaited

Pitt than the impeachment of Warren Hastings. It was his duty to restore England to financial prosperity. A devastating war, to which the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not accessory, had depleted the treasury and ruined the credit of the nation. The inheritance of debt, heavily laid upon him, was lightly borne; and Pitt's harshest critics have not denied the wisdom and energy of his financial policy. Above all, he never shirked the difficulties of his position. He made no attempt to underrate the embarrassment of the country. "He would consider himself," said he, in introducing his first budget, "as wanting in feeling, duty, and gratitude, if he should decline, from motives of personal safety, the irksome office of closing up the accounts of war." He was driven by circumstances to propose a loan in a year of peace,

but he did not hesitate to perform an unpopular task ; and he made his statements with so fine a lucidity and in so amiable a spirit of conciliation as not merely to awaken interest, but to enforce conviction. Of how many financial speeches may it be said, as of Pitt's, that they can be read with understanding after a lapse of more than a century ?

And it was not merely the war which had disarranged the finances of the country. A vast increase in smuggling had made it impossible to collect the proper revenues. About our coasts there was an illicit trade which, by the romantic spirit of adventure, had endeared itself to all classes. If a smuggler was caught and hanged, that was the fortune of war ; but so long as he prospered and was at large, he might rely upon the aid not only of his own kind, but of the parson and

the magistrate. To attempt to suppress so popular a trade was clearly beyond the strength of Parliament, and Pitt took the only wise course: he so greatly diminished its profits as to render it unworthy its danger and expense. The staple of smuggling was tea; and the extent of the trade may be estimated by the fact that, while thirteen millions of pounds were annually consumed in England, no more than five millions and a half paid the legitimate duty. However, by reducing the duty from 119 per cent to 12½ per cent Pitt ruined the illicit industry, and made up the deficit by a substituted tax upon windows. Thus by one prudent measure he checked smuggling, enriched the India Company, and protected the pocket of the people against a monstrous exaction.

Not content with the suppression of

smuggling, Pitt was determined to carry economy into every corner of public life. The statesman who had declined the Clerkship of the Pells exacted from others the sacrifice which was natural to himself. There was no sum which he thought unworthy of salvation, especially if hitherto it had been squandered in extravagance and corruption. For instance, the franking of letters by Members of Parliament had become to many unscrupulous persons an easy source of revenue, or a cheap method of obliging their friends. Some there were, belonging to mercantile houses, who saved as much as £800 a-year by a practice which was devised to encourage a frequent communication between Members of Parliament and their constituents. And so it was enacted that no Member should frank a letter or packet unless the whole superscrip-

tion was in his own handwriting, and unless the name, the post town, and the date were written in full by the sender; and further, that no Member should receive a letter or packet free, save at his residence or in the lobby of the House.

In the same spirit of honest economy was passed the Offices Reform Bill, which was destined to put an end to perquisite and speculation; and it is characteristic of the factious Opposition that its wise provisions were violently opposed. "The bill," said Sheridan, "had no great view worthy of the means it authorised. It was a rat-catching bill, instituted for the purpose of prying into vermin abuses." Yet there are few tasks better worth accomplishing than the extinction of vermin, and Pitt clearly recognised its necessity. "For his part," said he, "he could see no reason for passing over

the most trifling abuses, except laziness or pride, and these were obstacles which he hoped would never stand between him and his duty; nor could he conceive how, in the present situation of this country, any person or persons to whom the care of its interests was entrusted could justify to themselves to omit any exertion that might tend even in the most minute particular to promote that economy on which the recovery of the State from its present depressed condition so much depended." And as it was Pitt's business to restore the credit of the country, he was indifferent to the ridicule of Sheridan and Burke. What mattered it to him if the great rhetorician taunted him with loving "to hunt in holes and corners after

Rats and mice and such small deer

As had been Tom's food for seven long year" ?

What mattered it if the same orator described the bill as "a reptile crawling in the dirt, which would be found to bite hard where the constitution ought not to be lacerated"? Pitt had done what he could to suppress corruption by precept as well as by example, and the public life of England has ever since been the better for his exertion.

To discharge the obligations imposed by the war, to fund the unfunded debt, to diminish smuggling by lessening the duties on tea and wine,—these were enterprises which rendered inevitable an increase of taxation, and Pitt displayed a singular ingenuity in discovering fresh sources of revenue. In his first budget he set himself to raise £900,000 by new taxes. Hats, ribbons and gauzes, coals, horses kept for the saddle or racecourse, printed and stained linens and calicoes, hackney coaches, paper, bricks and tiles,

were chosen to contribute to the revenue of the country, while a duty was laid on licences granted to traders dealing in excisable commodities, and upon qualifications for shooting, and upon deputations taken out from lords of manor to kill game. The variety of these taxes ensured an equal incidence, and prevented the injustice of the whole burden falling upon one class.

In 1785 Pitt proposed in addition taxes upon post-horses, gloves, and the licences of pawnbrokers, as well as a graduated tax upon men-servants and a tax upon maid-servants, which, said he, "might probably find one kind of objection from the grave and sober part of the House, and might also encounter the jocular ideas and merry witticisms of the other part." For either criticism he was prepared, and the taxes which he proposed so eloquently answered his

expectation that by 1788 there was a clear surplus of £27,000, and he was able to boast "that our improved condition came from no forced revenues, but was the fair and actual result of increased commerce." In a few years war and revolution put an end to Pitt's dreams of national wealth, but to ascribe the tangle of debt, in which an inevitable contest presently involved us, to Pitt's financial incapacity, as do many of his critics, is to confuse cause and effect. The wisest Chancellor of the Exchequer that ever lived could not arm the nation against a courageous and persistent foe without emptying the treasury and sacrificing his cherished principles of thrift and economy.

Meanwhile Pitt had been making a brave attempt to reduce the National Debt by the institution of his famous Sinking Fund. With all the enthus-

iasm of youth he attacked the impossible. He thought that not only the Commons and England were hopefully "looking to the business of this day," but that all the Powers of Europe watched the enterprise with fear and envy; and he made his proposals in a tone of pride and exultation to which his hearers were not accustomed. "To behold this nation," said he, "instead of despairing at its alarming condition, looking boldly its situation in the face, and establishing upon a spirited and permanent plan the means of relieving itself from all encumbrances, must give such an idea of our resources, and of our spirit of exertion, as will astonish the nations around us, and enable us to regain that pre-eminence to which we are on so many accounts so justly entitled." And what was the spirited and permanent plan which was to

achieve all this? At first sight it seemed simplicity itself. It was merely to set aside one million a-year, which no power on earth should touch, and which should be allowed to accumulate as best it might. In order that the money should remain intact and inalienable, Pitt proposed "that it be vested in certain commissioners, to be by them applied quarterly to buy up stock: by this means no sum so great will ever lie ready to be seized upon on any occasion, and the fund will go on without interruption."

Nor, in Pitt's view, would there be any limit to its increase. "If this million," said he, "to be so applied, is laid out, with its growing interest, it will amount to a very great sum in a period that is not very long in the life of an individual, and but an hour in the existence of a great nation; and

this will diminish the debt of the country so much as to prevent the exigencies of war from raising it to the enormous height it has hitherto done. In the period of twenty-eight years the sum of a million, annually improved, would amount to four millions *per annum*." Alas! the reality was far less attractive than the dream. Beyond the fact that it encouraged thrift, Pitt's plan cannot easily be defended. If the million were a legitimate surplus, nothing could have been wiser than to devote it to the reduction of the National Debt. But if it were borrowed, then the taxpayer would get the worst of the bargain. Moreover, the plan of purchasing stock and permitting the capital to grow at compound interest recalls the self-denying finance of those who gain their livelihood by taking in one another's washing. The interest on

the stock would be paid by the same taxpayers who were to profit by the investment, and once involved in the circle, it is not easy to understand how they would get out. It has been suggested, indeed, that Pitt saw the fallacy of his plan, and that he concealed the fallacy in order to pass his measure. For, even if he were foiled of his compound interest, he would save at least a million a-year, and would thus loyally reduce the burden of debt.

While attempting to set the Treasury in order, Pitt could not but have seen the growing disaffection of Ireland, and he courageously endeavoured to find a remedy for this intolerable evil. Ever since the Irish had been granted their independent Parliament, and had been permitted to arm their volunteers, they had put this force to no other purpose than to intimidate the English Govern-

ment. Across the Irish Channel there was a constant menace, and Pitt, always eager to know the worst, did not turn a deaf ear to the clamour. The evidence of rebellion, moreover, was overwhelming. "Were I to indulge in distant speculation," wrote the Duke of Rutland, Pitt's Lord-Lieutenant, "I should say that without an union Ireland will not be connected with England in twenty years longer." Time showed how true was this prophecy. Lord Camden gave a similar testimony. "This people," said he, "are intoxicated with their good fortune, and wish to quarrel with England to prove their independence. Big with their own importance and proud of their volunteers, they are a match, as they imagine, for the whole world. But as Galba describes the Romans, '*nec totam servitutem pati possunt, nec totam libertatem.*'" And,

while Flood demanded a measure of reform for the Protestants, the Catholics, headed by Lord Bristol, the fanatical Bishop of Derry, cried aloud for emancipation.

Meantime foreign influence was urging the people to rebel. The Duke of Rutland suspected that the lower classes "were wrought upon by French or American emissaries," while Lord Mornington saw a clear proof of French interposition in the fact that "a great number of French coins, of the coinage of 1784, had been received in the Custom House in payment of duties in Dublin." But it was Lord Temple who took the most desperate view of the situation. "I have sent to Pitt to communicate my Irish alarms," he wrote to Grenville on July 3, 1784. "I have had four letters, all full of apprehensions, which, to say truth, have infected me; and, in

all events, I think it highly necessary to alarm the Government. The worst symptom is the eagerness with which money is called in and remitted to England by the merchants of Ireland. . . . The preparations of cannon, powder, and ball go on as usual, and the fashion of wearing French cockades is not confined to Handy Pemberton." Nor, as the weeks passed, did Temple express a more favourable opinion. In September he contemplated a crisis, "for which neither Pitt nor the Duke of Rutland was prepared," and then, confessing that he might be "the Cassandra of this story," he declared the game irrecoverable, "unless some well-digested scheme of commerce be prepared for both Parliaments to redeem the promise from the throne of Ireland."

The Duke of Rutland was also in favour of "a fixed and systematic plan."

He deplored as worse than useless such schemes as went not beyond the exigencies of the day. Dublin, he pointed out, was under the dominion and tyranny of the mob, and, though persons "were daily marked out to be tarred and feathered," the magistrates refused to arrest, while the volunteers encouraged, the rioters. Two courses only were possible if order was to be restored to Ireland—repression or conciliation; and Pitt chose conciliation with all the hopefulness of a young statesman. His correspondence with the Duke of Rutland, far warmer in tone than was usual with him, proves the ardour and sincerity of his policy. Having decided that repression and temporising were alike dangerous, he desired to treat Ireland not merely with justice, but with magnanimity. As early as October 1784 his mind was made up, and he informed

the Lord-Lieutenant that he was willing to give Ireland an almost unlimited commercial advantage if she would contribute her share to the common exigencies of the Empire. He would even go farther on the path of conciliation, and grant a prudent and temperate reform of Parliament, in the advantages of which for Ireland as for England he had a profound faith, provided that the Catholics were excluded from any share in the representation or government of the country. He knew well the difficulties which lay ahead of him, but he believed that they might all be overcome by vigilance, temper, and firmness.

Above all, his hope was strong. He "could not allow himself to doubt" that he would gain his point in Parliament, and when Parliament was secure, he did not apprehend much clamour or discontent without doors. At first,

however, he put reform aside, and devoted himself to the making of a reciprocal treaty between England and Ireland. A wiser scheme of preference was never formed. If commercial advantages and a common defence are bonds which unite peoples, then Pitt should have brought peace and prosperity where before there was nothing but enmity and suspicion. The principle of Pitt's plan may best be stated in his own words: it was, "that a treaty should be concluded with Ireland, by which that country should be put on a fair, equal, and impartial footing with Great Britain in point of commerce with respect to foreign countries and to our colonies; and as to the mutual intercourse between each other, that this equality should extend to manufactures, to importation, and to exportation; and that Ireland, in

return for this concession, should contribute a share towards the protection and security of the general commerce of the Empire."

He introduced his eleven resolutions in a speech which, for clarity and conviction, he did not often surpass. He pointed in a brief retrospect to the injustice of which, in the past, Ireland had been the victim. She had been debarred from the use and enjoyment of her own resources; she had been made subservient to the opulence and interest of England; she had been forbidden to share in the bounties of nature or to profit by the energy of her citizens. "That which had been the system," said he, in a memorable passage, "counteracted the kindness of Providence and suspended the industry and enterprise of man." But at last the Government had discovered the best

means of uniting the two countries, and he confidently urged the House to accept his measures. Instantly the objections which he had anticipated were advanced upon the other side. The manufacturers of Lancashire saw their privileges threatened, and did not hesitate to exaggerate the dangers of the concession. The low rate of wages, said they, would enable the Irish to undersell their rivals. Ireland would become the mart of the Empire, to the ruin of English trade and English enterprise.

Thus the merchants; and they were eloquently seconded by all the leaders of the Coalition. Fox, with a recklessness of courage, argued on both sides, and saw in Pitt's proposals not only the slavery of Ireland, but the destruction of the Navigation Act, which Pitt himself had described as "the palladium of our commerce." The discussion was long and

acrimonious, but Pitt's skilful management prevailed over all opposition, and the propositions were accepted by the English Parliament. Never did Pitt speak with greater passion than when for the second time he pleaded the twofold advantage of his scheme. "He entreated the House to consider how momentous was the object before it; that it tended to conciliate a difference between this and our sister kingdom, which, though now confined to secret repinings, to disgusts, to jealousies, and a war of interests and of passions, might perhaps, in time, proceed a length which he shuddered to think of; that it tended to enrich one part of the empire without impoverishing the other, while it gave strength to both; that like mercy, the favourite attribute of Heaven,

'It was twice bless'd,
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.'

The wisdom and ingenuity of the measure were obvious save to the eye of faction, and Ireland might have been expected to accept what was designed particularly for her benefit. Not even the contribution which she was asked to pay for the national defence could have proved a hardship, for as it was to come from the surplus of the hereditary revenue, its amount would depend upon her added prosperity. But it was Ireland, always irreconcilable, which rejected the proposal. Fox had concluded his last speech on the question with a phrase cunningly devised to excite opposition. "I will not barter English commerce for Irish slavery," said he; "that is not the price I would pay, nor is this the thing I would purchase." Caught up by the Irish, it became a watchword of revolt, and proved more efficacious in Dublin than hours of argu-

ment. Nor was this all. To conciliate his English supporters, Pitt had modified his plan, and no sooner was the bill sent to Ireland than a note of warning was heard. The independence of the Irish Parliament was said to be threatened. Grattan, Daly, and the Speaker were not pleased, while the Ponsonbys were up in arms. The Duke of Rutland was as emphatic as Mornington. "On one point, which I find to be contained in the body of the resolutions," he wrote, "I mean that which relates to the perpetuity of the laws for the collection of the revenue, I will not attempt to deceive you, but at once pronounce it impossible to be carried."

But Pitt had gone too far to retract his mischievous fourth proposition. At this last hour he could not trust the English majority to accept a change. Though

large, it was composed of men who acted for themselves, and he hardly knew from day to day what impression they might receive. "Moreover," said he, "we have an indefatigable enemy, sharpened by disappointment, watching and improving every opportunity." As the weeks passed the indignation of the Irish rose higher and higher. "The speech of Mr Grattan," said the Duke of Rutland on August 13, 1785, "was, I understand, a display of the most beautiful eloquence perhaps ever heard, but it was seditious and inflammatory to a degree hardly credible." And both Grattan and Flood made it quite clear that they aimed at nothing else than at war with England. It is not strange, therefore, to find Lord Mornington declaring that the hasty abandonment of the Bill was imperative, and abandoned it was with sorrow and reluctance. But it was

Lord Temple (now the Marquis of Buckingham) who keened the loudest over the death of the measure. Truly he was the Cassandra of the story. "Lost indeed!" he exclaimed, "and how lost? By the folly or treachery of Mr Orde."

And straightway he attributes the unhappy failure to the criminal incapacity of the Duke of Rutland and his subordinate, who, he is sure, can never again be trusted by Mr Pitt. The Marquis's disappointment, however, was perhaps not unalloyed with the satisfaction which comes from the misfortune of a rival. To Pitt not even egoism could suggest a solace. He had undertaken his task in a spirit of single-minded patriotism. "Let this business with Ireland terminate well," he had written to the Lord-Lieutenant, "let peace continue for five years, and we

shall again look any Power in Europe in the face." If the business with Ireland had terminated very ill, if once again Pitt was forced to pursue the petty expedients of a day, that was the fault of Fox and his friends, who had not scrupled to sacrifice the happiness of a country to their political ambition.

But Pitt was not dismayed by failure, and a year later he devised another, and this a successful, treaty of commerce. What he could not achieve with Ireland he achieved with France, and nothing that he did in the term of his peaceful administration was attended with happier results. It was no reckless experiment in one-sided free trade. It did not pretend to fight protective duties with free imports. It proposed to serve both countries by benefiting the consumers on either side the Channel. We agreed to take from

France on small duties the luxuries of her soil, which, as Pitt said, "the refinement of ourselves had converted into necessities"; while France, on her side, was to take from us, on equal terms, the products of our manufactories. But the wisdom of the measure did not disarm opposition. Fox, underrating the strength of Pitt's position, believed the defeat of the Minister possible, and attacked the proposed treaty with an unavailing bitterness.

In introducing his measure to the Commons, Pitt had anticipated the objection which it would meet from the enemies of France. He had denounced as monstrous and impossible the doctrine that France was, and must be, the unalterable enemy of Great Britain. Upon this point Fox took him up even before he had heard the details of the plan. He declared

that France was "the natural political enemy of Great Britain." "What made her so?" he asked. "Not the memory of Cressy and Agincourt: the victories of these fields had nothing to do with the circumstances. It was the overweening pride and boundless ambition of France,—her invariable and ardent desire to hold the sway of Europe." That may have been true, but it was a splendid irony which put the words in the mouth of Fox, who a few years later loved France far more than his native land, and who saw a perfect heroism in Napoleon's "invincible and ardent" love of conquest. However, not even Fox nor Burke nor Grey availed to obstruct the purpose of Pitt. The treaty, approved by a large majority of both Houses, answered the expectations of either side, and might long have continued to profit both

kingdoms had it not been interrupted by the French Revolution.

Meanwhile Pitt's position was still insecure. His majority, though large, was independent, and had it not been for the support of the Court party he might already have been ousted from office. Fox and his friends, encouraged by the rejection of the Irish propositions, regarded themselves as the favourites of the manufacturers, and half-believed that the office for which they had sacrificed so much was already in their grasp. And Pitt, isolated as ever, still fought his battle alone. Few as his active supporters were, in Wilberforce's words, "he made no friends." Yet all acknowledged the consummate mastery of his defence. Gibbon, who at the outset had no high opinion of "Billy," soon changed his tone. "A youth of twenty-five," said he, when

Pitt had been a year in office, "who raises himself to the government of an empire by the power of genius and the reputation of virtue, is a circumstance unparalleled in history, and, in a general view, is not less glorious to the country than to himself." Equally emphatic was the testimony of Rigby, a veteran with unrivalled knowledge of the House. "You know that I am not partial to Pitt," he told General Grant, "and yet I must own that he is infinitely superior to anything I ever saw in that House. . . . He, without support or assistance, answers them all with ease to himself, and they are just chaff before the wind to him." But the position of a solitary leader is always precarious, and Pitt was still open to assault, when a singular indiscretion put an end for many a long day to the hopes of office entertained by Fox and his colleagues.

At the beginning of November 1788 the King suddenly showed signs of insanity. He talked incessantly, on one occasion for sixteen hours without a break, until he became hoarse and unintelligible. As he told Lady Effingham, he grew an old man in an hour; and at last, by the imperious advice of the doctors, he was isolated from his Court. A brief note from Pitt to Grenville announced the melancholy news. "The account of last night," wrote Pitt, "is, that the King's state during that day had been perfectly maniacal. What I learnt from General Gr— yesterday morning was so much worse than on the day before, that I have begun to fear that the physicians have been more in the right than we thought." As readers of Miss Burney's 'Diary' will remember, the King's health varied from day to day; but it was soon clear that

he was no longer capable of government, and the need of a Regency was generally discussed. Instantly it was taken for granted that Fox, who hastily returned from abroad, would hold office under the Prince of Wales, and the Whigs believed that the hour of their triumph was at hand. The Marquis of Buckingham, then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, was convinced that the Government would be dismissed immediately. But his mind was made up. He would assist Grenville in the object nearest his heart—"I mean the support of him out of office, who, I verily believe, is (in office) the honestest Minister we ever saw." His one fear was that a coalition would be proposed, in which Pitt would take part; yet he hoped that "Pitt's wisdom and pride would steer clear of such a disgrace."

On all sides intrigue was busy, and

a mob of courtiers was ready to desert the King for the Prince at the first chance. Fox, Sheridan, and Burke formed themselves into a committee which should watch over the Prince's interests; and Lord Loughborough saw his eager ambition of the woolsack almost attained. Alas for his hopes! Thurlow, that artist in treachery, suddenly went over to the enemy's camp, and was received with all the honour due to a successful renegade. Everything, in fact, seemed settled, save the mere apportionment of offices, when Pitt once more gave proof of the practical statesmanship which distinguished him, and rudely aroused his opponents from their dreams of power.

He suggested, in brief, that the Regency of the Prince of Wales should be restricted. Though the Prince would exercise the royal power, under the

style and title of Regent of the Kingdom, his power should "not extend to the granting of any dignity of the peerage of the realm to any person whatever, except his Majesty's royal issue, who shall have attained the full age of twenty-one years." It was further enacted "that the said powers should not extend to the granting of any office whatever in reversion, or to the granting of any office, salary, or pension, for any other term than during his Majesty's pleasure except such offices as are by law required to be granted for life, or during good behaviour." The restrictions aroused a storm of anger. Fox, as though his accession were assured, declared that he expected to have the power, patronage, and emoluments of office. Burke taunted Pitt with setting himself up as a rival to the Regent, and spoke contemptuously of the Prince

on the other side of the House. Still more rashly Fox and his party, always ready to combat the divine right of kings, insisted that by divine right the Prince of Wales was Regent, with full powers and privileges, by virtue of the Constitution. A less honest man than Pitt might have followed Thurlow's example, and made terms with the Prince. For, restricted though he was, the Regent would yet have power to dismiss his Ministers; and Pitt after passing his Bill could cherish little hope of consideration.

But, heedless of consequences, he pursued the course he believed right; and the Prince could not but answer the Minister's letter, which set forth the conditions of Regency, with a dignified acceptance, drafted it is said by Burke. And then by an ironical piece of good fortune the King recovered, and for the

Regency Bill were substituted addresses of congratulation. In vain had the floods of rhetoric been poured forth by Burke and Fox; in vain had the wild hopes of the Prince's friends been entertained; in vain had Thurlow proved himself once more a traitor. The King's recovery put an end to intrigue and aspiration, and placed Pitt upon "a height of power and glory." Nor did the tragedy end without a touch of humour. In spite of the Marquis of Buckingham's exertions in Dublin, in spite of the fact that "the famous Irish Act of Henry VII. pledged Ireland to acknowledge as her sovereign the Prince who shall be king *de facto* in England," the Irish Parliament proved its independence by accepting an unlimited Regency; and, when Buckingham declined to transmit an address to the Prince of Wales inviting him to assume

the government of Ireland with full kingly powers, the address was carried to London by delegates of the two Houses. The delegates did not arrive in London until after the King's recovery, and it is not surprising that they were received with ridicule.

But Pitt's position was at last unassailable. During five years of practical administration he had proved himself a wise ruler not merely of Parliament but of the country. He had restored the State, impoverished by years of profitless campaigns, to financial prosperity. If he had failed to confer a signal benefit upon Ireland, the fault was not his. He had made a treaty of commerce with France; in New South Wales he had founded the first of our great Australian colonies. "This was the moment," says Macaulay, "at which his fame and fortune may be

said to have reached the zenith." Here Macaulay's prejudice misled him. It was Pitt's destiny in a few brief years to show himself yet greater in war than he had been proved in peace.

CHAPTER III.

THE WAR WITH FRANCE.

It is the irony of Pitt's career that, being by sympathy and temperament a great lover of peace, he should have been called upon to conduct the most desperate war of modern times. Though he was bred in the bellicose school of his father, he would gladly have exchanged the glories of war for the calm pursuits of economy and reform. But, while his preference was strong, he was not a man to avoid his legitimate responsibilities. Deeply interested in foreign affairs, he had already made

England's name respected abroad, and with the aid of Sir James Harris had effectually foiled France's pretensions in Holland. That was in 1787, and even then he was prepared to offer to the well-meaning party in the United Provinces the same help of which in later years so much is heard, "pecuniary relief for the present, and assurances of support for the future." Fortunately the tact of Sir James Harris made armed intervention unnecessary, and England was not called upon to disturb her "state of growing affluence and prosperity." Two years later a dispute with Spain brought us to the very verge of hostilities. An English ship, peaceably anchored in Nootka Sound, off Vancouver, was seized by two Spanish men-of-war, and the English flag which flew over the settlement was torn down in circumstances of

intolerable insult. The reparation demanded by Pitt being refused, the Minister asked for a general impressment of seamen and a credit of a million, and war would certainly have followed had not Spain, deserted by France, made a complete submission.

A quarrel with Russia had not the same satisfactory result. After a long and complicated discussion Catherine II. refused to restore Ockzakov, which she had taken from the Turks. Pitt, whose policy, unlike his father's, was antipathetic to Russia, saw in Catherine's act of aggression a serious disturbance of the balance of power. "In the aggrandisement of Russia and the depression of Turkey," said he, "our commercial and our political interests are both concerned." It seemed clear to him that, if Russia made conquests on the coasts of the Black Sea, the

embarrassment of Prussia, our ally, was inevitable. And if Prussia were embarrassed, what safety was there for Poland, or Denmark, or Sweden? Pitt was resolved to act firmly. He was ready, even eager, to put the matter to the arbitrament of war. But for once the opposition of Fox and Burke availed; Ockzakov was too remote to touch the imagination of the people, which is never sensitive to the balance of power; and Pitt, seeing that he could not carry the country with him, hastily withdrew his opposition to Russia, and thus suffered the worst blow ever inflicted upon his prestige. The Ministers in London told their courts that "England was reduced to a state of perfect inactivity (*nullité*) with regard to foreign politics," while Catherine passed it off with a pleasantry uttered in the hearing of Fawkener, the British

envoy, that dogs who bark do not bite. However, Ockzakov was of no strategic importance, and the embroilment was soon forgotten in the general upheaval.¹

For meanwhile the French Revolution had begun, and the eyes of Europe were cast in dismay upon Paris. For many years the outbreak had been diversely prophesied. As early as 1753 Lord Chesterfield had boldly hazarded his opinion. "All the symptoms," he said, "which I have ever met with in

¹ The episode is chiefly memorable for the conduct of the Whigs, who instantly made themselves the partisans of Russia. The Empress was so delighted with the eloquence which Fox devoted to her cause, that she placed his bust between the busts of Demosthenes and Cicero. But her admiration soon waned. "The remark she made on reading one of Mr Fox's late speeches," wrote Whitworth to Lord Grenville, "was, *voilà un beau lustre gâté*; and she added that she should be obliged to imitate the National Convention, however much she despised it, in covering with a veil that which now seemed only to reproach her with a misplaced predilection." Nor was the party of Mr Fox content to plead the cause of Russia

history, previous to great changes and revolutions in government, now exist and daily increase in France." To Sir James Harris the wish was perhaps father to the thought, yet he had a profound knowledge of affairs, and he had good hopes of the future. "There are strong reports of a popular insurrection in France," he wrote from The Hague, on the 21st August 1787. "*Si Dieu voudrait les punir par où ils ont péché, comme j'admirerais la justice divine.*" The opinions of Arthur Young and Gouverneur Morris are familiar, in the House of Commons. One of its number—Mr Robert Adair—went post-haste to St Petersburg, where he was received with great kindness by the Empress, and where he did his best to embarrass the British envoy. It was generally believed, and with excellent reason, that he was the accredited agent of Fox. By whomever sent, he attempted to "counteract the effect of a negotiation." It is satisfactory to note that his mission failed, and that, in Whitworth's words, he had "but a bad report to make to his principals."

and all observers, save Thomas Jefferson, who saw the world through a fog of maxims, thought that the days of the old *régime* were numbered. But prophecies commonly go unheeded, even by the prophets themselves, and when at last the revolt came Europe was taken by surprise. Except among the Whigs, the hereditary foes of the French, the news evoked little sympathy in England. In those days there was no *entente cordiale*, and a hatred of France was the birthright of every Englishman. Had not Fox himself declared five short years ago that France was "the natural enemy of Great Britain"? When the Prince of Wales, eager to retrench, had suggested a sojourn across the Channel, Malmesbury was indignant. "As for France," said he, "I hope never to see a Prince of Wales there on any other purpose than

that which carried the Black Prince, or ever to hear of his being at Calais but to fix the British standard on its walls." The feeling was somewhat crude, but it was generally intensified by the Revolution, even though the extreme Whigs, suddenly repenting themselves of their ancient hostility, found a new virtue in bloodshed and a terrible beauty in Jacobinism.

The taking of the Bastille,¹ the worst piece of hypocrisy known to history, was,

¹ When the Bastille was destroyed there were but a few prisoners within its walls. It contained neither *oubliettes* nor *cachots*. The instruments of torture, described with a heart-rending eloquence, were ancient suits of armour concealed in a cellar. To treat its captives like gentlemen was a tradition of the house, and the worst cruelty ever committed in its precincts was the murder of M. de Launey, the humanest of gaolers, and of M. de Losme, "the good angel of the prisoners." But Jacobins on either side the Channel were careless of the truth, and the brigands who destroyed the famous castle of the Faubourg St Antoine sang praises to liberty as they wrought their crime.

indeed, a touchstone of politics. It instantly discovered the true and false friends of liberty. "How much the greatest event it is," exclaimed Fox, "that ever happened in the world! And how much the best!" Burke, adopting a tone of lofty statesmanship utterly unlike that which had been his in the debates of the Regency Bill, deplored the Revolution and all its works. "Liberty," said he, "is the birthright of our species. But whenever a separation is made between liberty and justice, neither is, in my opinion, safe."

Henceforth there were new parties and fresh alliances. A sharp division was made between the new and the old Whigs. A small handful, which believed that revolutions were good in themselves, whose sanguine mind thought a trite proverb a better instrument of government than honesty and justice, supported

Fox. The Horne Tookes, the Dr Prices, the Tom Paines, rallied to the blood-red standard, and found in a hatred of their own country a natural corollary to their love of France and anarchy. Burke, on the other hand, carried with him all the better elements of the party, and with pen and voice pleaded the cause of law and order. When Fox boasted in the House that "it was now universally known throughout Europe that a man, by becoming a soldier, did not cease to be a citizen," Burke retorted that "these soldiers were not citizens, but base hireling mutineers and mercenary sordid deserters, wholly destitute of any honourable principle." But it was in his 'Reflections on the French Revolution,' masterly not merely as a criticism but as a piece of constructive policy, that Burke most brilliantly illustrated his views, and publicly renounced

the co-operation of Fox, Erskine, and Sheridan.

Pitt took the only course that was possible for a Minister. While he deplored the vain excesses of Fox, he refused to see in the Revolution an occasion for a holy war. Though he was fully alive to the dangers of epidemical fanaticism, he could not join Burke in the preaching of a crusade. His was the more difficult, if homelier, task of governing the country and of preserving peace. It was not his business to insult France, a country with which we lived in public on friendly relations. The speech which he delivered in the famous debate on February 9, 1790, was a model of parliamentary tact. "I wish for the restoration of tranquillity in France," said he, "although it appears to me to be distant. Whenever her system shall become restored, if it should prove

freedom rightly understood, freedom resulting from good order and good government, France would stand forward as one of the most brilliant Powers in Europe." Such, indeed, was his consistent attitude. So long as France refrained from attacking England or breaking her treaties, she was mistress in her own house. Even when Russia and Sweden were minded to take up the cause of the Emigrants, Pitt held aloof, and still determined to preserve a strict neutrality.

Nor did aught happen in 1791 to disturb the calm of English politics; and on January 31, 1792, Pitt met the House of Commons with a cheerful confidence in prolonged peace and prosperity. The King, in his Speech on opening the Session, declared that he was induced by the friendly assurances

received from foreign Powers "to think that some immediate reduction might safely be made in our naval and military establishments." Pitt, speaking for himself, was yet more definite. He entertained neither doubt nor fear. In explaining to the House that the Sinking Fund would amount to four millions per annum in about fifteen years, he spoke these ever-memorable sentences: "I am not, indeed, presumptuous to suppose," thus it stands in the Parliamentary History, "that when I name fifteen years I am not naming a period in which events may arise which human foresight cannot reach, and which may baffle all our conjectures. We must not count with certainty on a continuance of our present prosperity during such an interval; but unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country

when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than we may at the present moment." Thus it is that some malignant sprite loves to perplex the wise. England was on the edge of a war destined to last more than twenty years, and to try her resources to the utmost. And Pitt saw nothing but a roseate vision of wealth and peace. In future, he thought, less should be spent on the defences of the country; the ancient debt, incurred by the American War, should be paid off; and England, at last relieved from the incubus of debt, should cultivate her garden in undisturbed quietude. But he did not reckon with France. He did not discern that energy could be intensified by disorder, that genius might perfect the task begun by energy. And if the pronouncement does little credit to his fore-

sight,¹ at least it absolves him from the charge of malicious hostility so often brought against him. It has pleased the Whig historians to represent Pitt as a monster of carnage, taking pleasure in the slaughter which his own will contrived; and the truth is, that, instead of his driving the country to war, the war stole upon him unawares at the very moment when his hope of peace was highest.

¹ There is some excuse for Pitt's error of judgment, since he was confronted by a situation new to the experience of the world. Even so close an observer as Gouverneur Morris was deceived. "This unhappy country, bewildered in the pursuit of metaphysical whimsies," thus he wrote at the end of 1790, "presents to our moral view a mighty ruin. . . . The Assembly, at once a master and a slave, new in power, wild in theory, raw in practice. It engrosses all functions, though incapable of exercising any. . . . Such a state cannot last. But how will it end?" We know now that it could end only in a war of aggression, that most violent purger of theories. But neither Morris nor Pitt possessed the material on which to form an opinion.

But the cruel excesses which disgraced Paris in the summer of 1792 could not be overlooked even by the optimism of Pitt. On August 17 it was resolved to recall Lord Gower from Paris, and, furthermore, to "express what was felt on the subject of the French King's personal situation." Meanwhile the Jacobins, with complacent brutality, went from murder to murder, and marked their sense of hostility to England by styling it the "foyer d'une contre-Révolution." Two months later we find Pitt conveying an intimation to France that she must make no attempt against Holland. Yet even in November he was so far from despair, that he offered to mediate between France and Prussia. The infamous decree of the Convention, promising aid and brotherhood to all nations which re-

belled against their rulers, failed to shake his resolution. But from this moment, though Pitt hoped against hope, peace was impossible. On December 3 George III., while applauding the Minister's resolution to hear the proposal of the French agent "with temper," is assured that the negotiation will fail. "Intercepted letters," he wrote, "convince me that the French are hardy enough to attempt opening the Scheldt, which we can never allow."

Happily the people was as energetic as the King. Stirred at last from its security by the insolence of France and by the treasonable harangues of Fox and his friends, it was eager to take arms. "Nothing can exceed the good disposition of this country in the present moment," wrote Lord Grenville on December 18. "The change

within the last three weeks is little less than miraculous. God grant that it may last long enough to enable us to act with that vigour which can alone preserve us. If this disposition flags, and the country relapses into indifference or fear, we shall still be municipalised; but if we can maintain the present spirit, it will enable us to talk to France in the tone which British Ministers ought to use." Nor did Pitt for one instant fall below the high occasion. He faced the war, which was now inevitable, with all the simplicity and firmness of his character. Catherine II., the most accomplished statesman in Europe, expressed the general view when she declared that "she could not sufficiently admire the wise and steady conduct of Mr Pitt, to which was principally to be attributed the favourable turn which affairs had taken in Eng-



The GIANT-FICTIONUM amusing himself

From a Caricature

by Gilray.

land." The murder of Louis XVI.¹ sent a thrill of horror through England, and disposed all men, save the fiercest Jacobins, to look for the arrival of war with equanimity. Indeed, when at last the declaration came, it brought with it a feeling of relief, and George III. no doubt spoke for his country when he admitted that "the step taken by the faction that governed France of jointly declaring war against the Kingdom and the Dutch Republic was highly agreeable to him."

France, then, declared war, and this fact is as clear an answer as Pitt's

¹ It is impossible to exaggerate the distress which this event caused the Emigrants. Even Talleyrand, who was then at Juniper Hall, appeared to be shocked. "*Je suis à la campagne,*" he wrote, "*et je compte y rester encore quelques jours. Tout ce qui avait le cœur français a besoin de solitude.*" And yet it is difficult to resist the conclusion that he, too, would have been a regicide, had he been in Paris.

love of peace to those who have represented Pitt as eager for hostilities at all costs and with scanty preparation. Yet no sooner was the die cast than he came forward as the tireless champion of England's cause. From 1793 to the day of his death he knew no rest from work or anxiety. Henceforth he ruthlessly suppressed his own policy and his own ambitions, whenever they interfered with the defence of his country. The hatred with which "*ce monstre Pitt*" was viewed in France is the best measure of his success. No disaster could daunt his courage, no failure could impair his energy. He witnessed the triumph of his enemies, he endured the far heavier buffets of mutiny and treason, with the equal mind which distinguished the Romans of old. But though he knew that he must defend England single-

handed, he did not disdain such aid as even his political opponents might bring him. In 1792 a determined effort was made, with Pitt's consent, to strengthen the ministry from without. Fox declared, as well he might, that he loved coalitions, and that, "as a party man, he thought it a good thing for his party to come into office, were it only for a month." But he would be content with nothing but Pitt's departure from the Treasury, and such a proposal even Lord Loughborough refused to make.

The truth is that Fox's friends were as bitterly opposed to Fox as were Pitt and the King. In Burke's words, "Mr Fox's coach stopped the way." The New Whigs, loyal to their ancient principles, looked with horror on their late leader's republicanism. And it was they who, with all honesty of purpose, made

any coalition impossible, in which Fox was involved.¹ But two years later,—in July 1794,—when Fox's hatred of England had left him friendless, Pitt accepted the help of Portland and his friends. Though the most of them were useful only as a check to opposition, one at least—Lord Spencer—proved an able administrator, and most were loyal in obedience to their chief. Pitt's own comment on the alliance was characteristic. "Are you not afraid," asked Addington, "that you might be outvoted in your own Cabinet?" "I am under no anxiety on that account," replied Pitt; "I place much dependence on my new colleagues, and I place

¹ Gilbert Elliott's defection is characteristic both in itself and for its excuse. He said that "Fox's conduct was founded on the worst of principles, on those on which the French Revolution was founded—that it went to overthrow the country, and that . . . it even became essential for our honour and for the sake of the country to separate from him."

still more dependence on myself." That, indeed, was the secret of his government. All power was centred in the hands of a strong man, who did what he thought right, and bent his colleagues, either Whigs or Tories, to his will.

Lord Macaulay has declared that Pitt's "military administration was that of a driveller," and these idle words have been repeated parrot-like by innumerable historians. With a singular naïveté the Essayist insisted that, had Pitt been a statesman after the pattern of Richelieu, Louvois, Chatham, or Wellesley, "he could have created one of the finest armies in the world, and would soon have discovered and brought forward generals worthy to command such an army." Not even Whig prejudice can scale loftier heights of folly than this. An army must be born and

trained, a general must prove his genius in the hard school of experience, before they can achieve a victory. Clive and Wolfe did not spring fully armed from the brain of Chatham, as from another Zeus. They won their spurs and deserved their promotion after the prosaic method of every day. Great as Pitt was, he was yet condemned to use such instruments as lay to his hand. He could not create half a dozen generals out of nothingness; he could not call out of the void a spectral army of 400,000 men and bid it scour the Continent. What he did was to use efficiently the full resources of the country. Macaulay, that not a single laurel leaf may be left upon the Minister's brow, asserts that "no mismanagement could ruin the English navy." Even if we accepted Macaulay's argument, it would be impossible thus arbitrarily to separate

honour and dishonour; but Pitt may boldly claim the credit of an excellent administration both by land and sea. It is only by a gross misunderstanding of his purpose that his conduct of the war may be condemned; and Macaulay would not have been so fluent in reproach had he looked upon the battlefield with any other eye than that of a rhetorician.

The defences of the country had always been to Pitt a matter of solicitude. He had done his best to secure by fortification the safety of the West Indies, and as early as 1786 he had moved the following resolution after a long and lucid speech: "That it appears to this House, that to provide effectually for securing His Majesty's dockyards at Portsmouth and Plymouth by a permanent system of fortifications . . . is an essential object for the safety of the

State, ultimately connected with the general defence of the Kingdom, and necessary for enabling the fleet to act with full vigour and effect, for the protection of commerce, the support of our distant possessions, and the prosecution of offensive operations in any war in which the nation may hereafter be engaged." Though the project was violently opposed, as were all other projects which did not fit the humour of the Whigs, as an infringement of the liberty of the subject, it sufficiently proves the interest which Pitt took in the administration of the army and navy, even when the prospect of war was distant indeed.¹

¹ The Hon. J. W. Fortescue, in his 'History of the Army,' charges Pitt with starving the private soldier, and with "allowing the army to sink into a condition which turned it from a safeguard to a peril to the State." The charge, more definite than Lord Macaulay's, is far too sweeping. In the early years of his administration Pitt was more nearly concerned to pay the

But he did not at once find an opportunity of proving his skill and interest. For the first two years of the war the operations were circumscribed and ineffectual. So long as Holland stood in need of defence, so long as it seemed worth while to aid the cause of the Emigrants, a wide outlook was impossible. But when Holland fell into the hands of France, and the helpless egoism of the Emigrants—"ces Jacobins de Coblentz," as M. de Bouillé called them—was plainly revealed, the object of the war was simplified, and Pitt's excellent policy became clear. Knowing the limitations of the British army, Pitt made few attempts to land any debt incurred by an old war than to prepare for a new one, and when the contest came upon him it was hardly the moment to disturb a system of payment which had seemed reasonable for more than a century, and which had served his father well. If he were wrong, at least he must share the blame with Chatham and many another administrator.

considerable force on foreign soil. The failure of the Duke of York, overborne by Coburg and Mack, to march upon Paris did not encourage the despatch of troops from Great Britain.¹ What could be achieved by raids, and that is not a little, Pitt did achieve; but for the most part his plan was to sweep the seas with the British navy, to seize the colonies of France and cripple her commerce, and to encourage the allies by liberal subsidies to play their part on the continent of Europe. These objects he kept steadily before him, and these objects he attained with all the success that was humanly possible.

When Sheridan spoke insolently "of

¹ When an immediate march upon Paris was proposed, it was received with ridicule in the British House of Commons. The French were of another opinion. St Just plainly told the Committee of Public Safety that, had the armies of England and the Emperor advanced upon Paris, an explosion would have been inevitable.

pilfering sugar islands," he did but give another proof of his political incompetence. Pitt's policy in this respect is above and beyond criticism. "By the mastery of the sea," writes Captain Mahan, "by the destruction of the French colonial system and commerce, by her persistent enmity to the spirit of aggression, which was incarnate in the French Revolution and personified in Napoleon, by her own sustained and unshaken strength, Great Britain drove the enemy into the battlefield of the Continental System, where his final ruin was certain." Indeed, though Pitt did not live to see this "certain ruin," it was consciously and effectively his achievement; and, with so highly accomplished and eloquent a champion on its side as Captain Mahan, Pitt's reputation need not fear the assaults of Lord Macaulay and the solid phalanx of the Whigs.

Wherever the British fleet sailed, there it compelled the victory. From the glorious First of June to the supreme triumph of Trafalgar, our admirals met with scarce a check; and after 1798 the French wisely did their best to avoid a combat by sea, finding that they could achieve no more than harass our trade or effect the capture of a few merchantmen. At no other period is there so splendid a series of victories to record. At Cape St Vincent a blow was struck at the fleet of Spain. The Dutch navy was destroyed by Duncan at Camperdown. The battle of the Nile imprisoned the French army in Egypt. Nelson, by turning his blind eye towards Admiral Parker's signal, destroyed the Danish fleet at Copenhagen, and rendered of no effect the alliance of the Armed Neutrality. Nor were we without our triumphs on land. In

Egypt, Sir Ralph Abercromby defeated General Menou; while in India the death of Citoyen Tippoo, and the subsequent battle of Assaye, rendered secure our Eastern Empire.

In brief, when England depended upon her own arms, she was most often victorious. The rich colonies of Holland, as well as of France, fell into her hands, to enrich her treasury, and to provide fresh naval bases for her fleet. Well might Pitt at the close of his first term of office boast of the triumphs which, under his auspices, Great Britain had achieved. "The hon. gentleman," said he in answer to Grey, "has been pleased to inveigh against the late Administration, which, from the delays of which it was guilty, he says, uniformly failed; but which, I say, notwithstanding those delays and their uniform failures, have somehow or other contrived, amidst the

desolation of Europe, to deprive our enemies of almost all their colonial possessions, to reduce almost to annihilation their maritime strength, to deprive them of, and to appropriate to ourselves, the whole of their commerce, and to maintain in security our territories in every part of the globe." It is a proud boast, which a proud retrospect abundantly justified.

But while the British Navy continued its career unbeaten and unchecked, there was a different tale to tell upon the continent of Europe. Pitt formed coalition after coalition, he granted subsidy after subsidy. In twelve years foreign states and potentates received £9,024,817, 10s. 6d.,¹ and all to no purpose. Prussia, Austria, and Russia were equally eager to receive the money, and

¹ These figures are taken from Lord Rosebery's 'Pitt': Appendix A.

equally eager to repudiate their bargains. If they were not acting in concert, as in the partition of Poland, each was playing for his own hand. Never once did they feel the weight of their obligation, or respect the plain terms of their alliances. Their object was less to damage France than to benefit themselves, and having accepted the money of England, they made no scruple of making peace behind England's back. The official correspondence of the time is packed with dreary records of bad faith and broken treaties. To use Grenville's phrase, "the German Princes thought England a pretty good milch cow," but beyond that they did not care to commit themselves. On one page we read of the meanness of the Emperor and his Councillors, who will do anything rather than move; on another we are told that England is

duped by the Prussians. Yet Pitt is not dismayed. "All my speculations depended on the full use of the Prussians," he writes in June 1794, "and if that cannot be obtained we are condemned to a wretched defensive. We must, however, attempt even impossibilities to avoid it."

But how should a king, whose tyranny even in trivial matters was equal to his indecision, make up his mind on a question of state? Russia and Austria showed no greater courage than Prussia, and though Pitt saw his subsidies wasted, he still thought it worth while to risk a little more, in the hope that "the present British spirit" might be stirred up in Berlin or Vienna. Now Malmesbury is in treaty with Lucchesini or Möllendorf. Now De Luc attempts vainly to extract a promise from Haugwitz. But neither Prussia nor Austria

lifts a hand to bar the progress of the French, and the generals of the Republic overrun Europe with courage and safety. What, then, could Pitt do but strengthen his navy and hope for peace?

The raids which he organised upon the enemies' coasts have been laughed to scorn, but the truth is that they were well conceived and, when successful, answered an excellent purpose. They kept the enemy in suspense, and hindered his freedom of action in other places. The expedition to Ostend, for instance, in 1798, achieved its purpose in destroying the sluice-gates of the canal which led from that town to the Scheldt, and the fact that the small force engaged was prevented by foul weather from escaping does not impair the wisdom of the design. So, too, the expedition to the

Helder in 1799, which has many times been deplored as a piece of reckless folly, was brilliantly successful, if we remember its object. Though the affair ended in a humiliating negotiation, the Dutch fleet had already surrendered, when the Duke of York came to terms, and the prizes which fell to the British Navy were twenty-five ships with 1190 guns. "The greatest stroke that has perhaps been struck in this war has been accomplished in a few hours, and with trifling loss."¹ Thus wrote Moore, whose judgment in such a matter is far weightier than that of prejudiced historians.

And so the war went on, with un-

¹ See Colonel Callwell's 'Military Operations and Maritime Preponderance,' p. 139. This author also defends the much-abused Walcheren expedition, which, had it been successful, would have resulted in the capture of the greater part of the enemy's fleet.

varying victory on the sea and never-ending defeat on land. The wonderful campaign of Italy made Napoleon master on the Continent, and England's allies, deprived of energy and enfeebled to cowardice, were only too glad to accept the terms that were flung at them. So Pitt saw his well-laid plans miscarry and his hardly gathered millions treacherously wasted. Nor were his bitterest enemies to be found abroad. At home he was assailed with all the vigour of envy and disappointment, with all the hatred which is born of conscious and irremediable failure. The memory of politics is short. Were it not, Fox and his friends would still be branded with the black mark of treason. Few in number, they were tireless in garrulity and constant in their devotion to England's foes. Wherever they found sedition they encouraged it, and they never

ceased to insist that Pitt was merely warring with opinions which were their own. To this Pitt's answer was simple and complete. "We are not in arms," said he, "against the opinions of the closet nor the speculations of the school. We are at war with armed opinions. . . . Their appearance in arms changed their character, and we will not leave the monster to prowl the world unopposed."

When an invasion was threatened, and Pitt was determined adequately to defend the country, Fox thought it pertinent to ask, "What is the duty of the House at this moment?" and to find himself this astounding answer, "To cherish the spirit of freedom in the people!" In 1795 there were cries in the streets of "No War! No Pitt!" and the King was shot at by a knave, who was never discovered. The episodes, insignificant in themselves, are worth re-

calling, because they served the ingenious purpose of the Opposition. Lord Lansdowne declared that the attack was "an alarm bell to terrify the people into weak compliances." He thought "it was a scheme planned and executed by Ministers themselves for the purpose of continuing their power." Truly the levity of Pitt's opponents is more remarkable even than their ferocity. They could regard no crisis seriously, they could not gravely believe in any danger. So little sense of proportion had they, that when England was fighting for her existence they could plead for an academic freedom, or assert that all would be well if only the franchise were lowered! In the very darkest day of England's history Fox and Grey thought it opportune publicly to withdraw from the service of the House of Commons,—not that they wished to do less mis-

chief, but that they hoped to do more. In the House or out of it, they attacked the Ministers with unabated fury. Their ardour, always at boiling-point, needed no affront to increase it. Well might the words with which Burke denounced their brothers across the Channel be applied to them. "Inflame a Jacobin!" said the orator; "you may as well talk of setting fire to hell!"

But Pitt, though he assumed in the House an air of indifference, did not overlook the crime of sedition. As in the country he suspended the Habeas Corpus Act, and punished the miscreants who used inflammatory language, so he did his best to check the ebullience of his political opponents. When at a birthday dinner to Fox the Duke of Norfolk, after inviting his hearers to armed rebellion, called upon them to drink "our Sovereign's health—the Majesty of the

People," he was at once dismissed from the offices which he held under the Crown, and Fox himself narrowly escaped the fate which in older days always overtook the traitor. Fired by an inglorious example, Fox gave the Duke's toast in an inflammatory speech, and Pitt, if he could, would most properly have sent him to the Tower. The speech was foolish enough, but to encourage revolution at such a crisis could not have been punished too severely, and it is a pity for the sake of justice as of picturesqueness that milder counsels prevailed.¹

¹ How near Fox came to imprisonment we know from a letter written by Pitt to Grenville, and preserved at Dropmore. "I understand there is a strong feeling among many of our friends," he writes, "that some direct notice must be taken of Fox's speech. An idea has been suggested which I think deserves consideration. It is, to begin with, one of the measures we talked of, that of ordering him to attend. If he disavows, prosecuting the printer. If

Meanwhile a scarcity of food and money was inflicting heavier blows than the armaments of France. The people cried out for a larger loaf, and flung the weight of all their hardships upon Pitt. So strong was the feeling against him at one moment, that he told Mornington and Wilberforce that "his head would be off in six months were he to resign." But, instead of resigning, he did his best to alleviate the common distress. He prohibited the use of wheat-flour in the manufacture of starch; he permitted the bakers to mix an inferior grain with the flour of which their bread was made; he forbade the

he avows, ordering him to be reprimanded; and then if he offers a fresh insult at the next Whig Club, instead of gratifying him by an expulsion, to send him to the Tower for the remainder of the session." Perhaps the precedents were unfavourable, but in any case Fox kept his freedom, though the King with his own hand struck his name from the list of Privy Councillors.

export and encouraged the import duty free of all sorts of food; he even granted a bounty on imported corn. His financial difficulties were still greater. The heavy taxes, and the heavier loans, which the conduct of the war made possible, strained the endurance of the country to the uttermost. Year after year he asked for vast sums of money, and he asked not in vain. The budget speeches which he made during the war were very different in tone and purpose from those which distinguished the earlier years of his administration, but he never underrated his necessities, and the many millions which he demanded were patriotically subscribed.

The speech of 1798, in which he proposed a cunningly graduated income-tax, remains to-day an unrivalled masterpiece of eloquence and ingenuity; and, in general, his system of paying for the

war was as prudent as it was courageous. Though he left the country heavily burdened with debt, he achieved the great work set him to achieve, with an efficient economy. Moreover, if Fox and Sheridan assailed him in Parliament, if the people clamoured in the street, the moneyed classes gave him their undeviating support. When in 1796 he proposed a loan of £18,000,000 on such terms that "from the very first the undertaking was a source of loss to the subscribers," he urged the proposal not as a speculation but as a duty, and the "loyalty loan," as it was called, was subscribed in fifteen hours and twenty minutes. And this was not all. In 1798 a free-will offering of £2,000,000 was made by the citizens to the Government, and so keen was the desire to subscribe that the hustings, put up near the Royal Ex-

change to receive the money thus cheerfully presented, were clamorously beset.

A still greater proof of the nation's trust in the Minister was given when the Bank of England suspended payment. The merchants of London, in solemn meeting, resolved to tender and accept bank-notes as payment, and though the followers of Fox prophesied instant ruin, the scheme was perfectly successful; the Funds rose at once; and payments in cash were not made again until 1818. But though the country felt the pinch of the war it was not impoverished. If vast expenses had to be met, the wealth and commerce of the country increased immeasurably. Indeed, the war itself was a profitable source of income, since the British navy converted the colonies of France and Holland into new markets, which swelled

our revenues and vastly added to our strength.¹

It was in 1797 that Pitt's spirit and endurance were most savagely tried. Napoleon's victories had left England almost without a friend in Europe, the Bank had suspended payment, and then, as if to strain our courage to the uttermost, the sailors of the Fleet mutinied at Portsmouth. Never was a crime more decently committed. The grievances of the sailors were real and

¹ See Captain Mahan's 'Sea Power and the French Revolution,' vol. i. p. 263, where Pitt's commercial policy is most concisely explained. "The intention to use neutrals," he says, "to the utmost extent desirable for British interests, thus coincided with the determination to stop a traffic esteemed contrary to them. The permission to neutrals, by the orders of January 1798, to carry the produce of French and Dutch colonies to Great Britain, when they were threatened with seizure if they sailed with the same for France or Holland, illustrates both motives of action; while it betrays the gradual shaping of the policy of forcing neutrals to make England the store-house and toll-gate of the world's commerce."

modestly expressed. The petition which they presented to the Board of Admiralty and the House of Commons was a model of dignity and good feeling. The delegates asked humbly for higher wages, better food, and wiser treatment of sick and wounded. In conclusion, it was unanimously agreed by the Fleet, "that from this day no grievances shall be received, in order to convince the nation at large that we know when to cease to ask as well as to begin, and that we ask nothing but what is moderate and may be granted without detriment to the nation or injury to the service." With some hesitation the demands were granted; and though, despite the justice of their case, the conduct of the sailors was subversive of all discipline, naught was needed to restore order save dignity and restraint.

Pitt, in demanding the sum necessary

to increase the wages and improve the food of the Fleet, claimed the silent indulgence of the House. He claimed it, of course, in vain. The national danger was as nothing to Sheridan and Fox, who, while voting for the resolution, would be satisfied with nothing less than the condemnation of the Government. Whitbread, not to be outdone, proposed a formal vote of censure on Pitt. The usual platitudes were spoken with the usual insincerity. Said Mr Whitbread: "In proportion as the crisis is awful beyond example, and the calamities with which the country is threatened are alarming to an unheard-of extent, it is impossible for me not to feel on the present occasion an uncommon degree of pain and embarrassment," &c., &c. Said Mr Fox: "I never in my life was more convinced of the propriety of a motion than I

am of that which is now before the House," &c., &c. But not one word did either of these politicians utter which might increase the safety of the country or strengthen it in a moment of acute peril against foreign aggression. They saw in the situation only another chance to insult a Minister, and they seized upon the chance without hesitation.

Meanwhile, the mutiny broke out afresh at Portsmouth, and when again it was quelled, the sailors at Sheerness revolted, and with a far worse reason. Led by a miscreant named Parker, these other rebels were inspired to insolence by a leaflet whose language, as Sheridan said, was "more like the language of a circulating library than that of a forecastle." It was, indeed, an inevitable result of Jacobinism, and it is difficult to hold Fox and his

friends guiltless. They were not, of course, privy to the printing and scattering of the noxious paper; but, had they not wantonly talked treason, their too eager followers would have lacked the wit to devise it.¹ Pitt acted with customary promptitude. He brought in a bill "for the better prevention and punishment of attempts to seduce persons serving in his Majesty's forces by land or sea from their duty and allegiance to his Majesty, or to incite them to mutiny or disobedience of orders." The urgency was obvious enough; and though Fox was silent, it may be set down to the lasting credit

¹ Canning's "Dactyls," in 'The Anti-Jacobin,' admirably stated the case:—

"Come, little Drummer Boy, lay down your knapsack here :
I am the Soldier's friend. Here are some Books for you ;
Nice clever Books, by Tom Paine the Philanthropist.
Here's Half-a-crown for you—here are some Handbills too—
Go to the Barracks, and give all the Soldiers some.
Tell them the Sailors are all in a Mutiny."

of Sheridan that he gave his support, if not his vote, to Pitt. His speech breathed an unaccustomed patriotism. "If there was," said he, "a rot in the wooden walls of old England, our decay could not be very far distant." That was true, but not the sentiment which one expected of Sheridan. Nor had he any doubt as to the cause of the mutiny. He was convinced that it was the work of foul incendiaries, against whom he expressed a lofty indignation. But despite the measures of Pitt the mutiny spread. There were signs of disaffection in the army; and Wilberforce records that the Prime Minister was "waked by the Woolwich artillery riot." The country, indeed, appeared to be involved in as wicked a revolution as that which had overwhelmed France; and it was only by the severest measures of suppression and isolation

that Pitt put an end to the rebellion. Parker was seized and hanged; and it is satisfactory to remember that in a few months the very ships which had mutinied at the Nore washed away the stain of disloyalty at the battle of Camperdown.

And all the while the fear of invasion kept England in suspense. Though the attacks made upon Ireland proved abortive, the *Armée d'Angleterre*, collected at Boulogne, gave promise of a better success. It was not, indeed, until a year after Trafalgar that the French abandoned the hope of landing an army in England and sacking London. None knew better than Napoleon that, if he could but be master of the Channel for twelve hours, *l'Angleterre aurait vécu*. But England, though in suspense, was not dismayed. There were those even who would have welcomed the invasion.

"I don't like to gasconade on the subject," wrote Dundas on January 5, 1798, "but I am confident, if the different departments of Government do their duty, and we don't sleep over the business of the country, an attempt to invade us two months hence is an event devoutly to be wished." And the courage of the country grew under disaster. In December 1798 the same Minister could report an enormous change of feeling and interest. He declared that ever since Great Britain had disentangled itself from the jealousies and perfidy of other countries, it had acted with fortitude, ardour, and perseverance. "Every impatience for peace," said he, "is gone,—the word is never mentioned; our commerce is unbounded, daily increasing, and adding to the wealth, the capital, and of course the resources and revenues, of the country."

And to whom was this state of things

due? To one man—to Pitt himself. Never was there a greater autocrat, and never was autocracy better justified. When the Duke of Portland and his friends joined the Government, Pitt confided his difficulty to Grenville. "I feel it quite impossible to venture the experiment of leaving the War Department in the Duke's hands. You know the difficulty with other Departments, even with the advantage of Dundas's turn for facilitating business, and of every act of his being as much *mine* as *his*." That is the point—every act was Pitt's. He controlled the finances, he pacified the people when money and food were scarce, he quelled mutiny, he suppressed sedition, he increased the navy by 82 per cent, he governed the army, he devised the plans of campaign. No detail escaped him, and he was ceaselessly ingenious in inspiration and sug-

gestion. "To see Pitt," wrote Wilberforce in 1794, "a great map spread out before him." Once, when invasion was imminent, Pitt bethought him that 7000 gamekeepers paid for licences, and resolved that these men, well trained to shoot, should aid in the defence of the country. This is but one example of his resource, and others may be found at every turn of his career. But most wonderful of all was the spirit of courage and equanimity wherewith he faced disaster. If it was England against the world, Pitt meant England, and no man should ever see him dismayed or cast down. Calm in danger, tranquil in victory, he could not but impart something of his own splendid temper to the country. In 1797, when the mutiny was at its worst, Lord Spencer went to Downing Street to consult the Prime Minister. "Pitt being roused from his slumbers,"—it is

Stanhope tells the story,—"sat up in bed, heard the case, and gave his instructions. Lord Spencer took leave and withdrew. But no sooner had he reached the end of the street than he remembered one more point which he had omitted to state. Accordingly he returned to Pitt's house, and desired to be shown up a second time to Pitt's chamber. There, after so brief an interval, he found Pitt as before, buried in a profound repose." Thus imperturbable, even in the foulest weather, was "the Pilot that weathered the Storm."

But though he carried on the war with incomparable spirit, Pitt had never any other aim than peace. He strove for no new territory, he sought no aggrandisement. Defied to state the object of the war in a single sentence, he stated it in a single word—"Security"; and had that been attained, he

would have rejoiced at any time to lay down arms. And his sanguine temperament persuaded him to hope always that the danger was past or passing. In all sincerity he believed that it would be a short war, heeding not the tragic forecast of Burke. As early as October 1795, he is sure that "if the budget goes off tolerably well, it will give us peace before Easter." His hopes were one and all doomed to disappointment. For the making of a peace two signatories are necessary, and, while Pitt was eager to arrange terms, France was sternly set upon the prosecution of the war. With the success of her armies, her insolence increased. As at the outbreak of hostilities she had offered assistance and fraternity to any nation that would rise against its rulers, so she was resolved never to make peace with

an English king, but with an English republic. She was determined that England should follow her down the path of progress every time she shifted her government. When a Convention ruled in Paris, then it was obvious that a Convention was the best system that could be devised for bringing London to a proper sense of freedom. When a Directory looked exultant over France, then a Directory must be imposed upon England as soon as may be. Only the details were uncertain. At one time it was thought prudent to make England, Scotland, and Ireland a federative republic, but presently other counsels prevailed, and they were to be transformed into three republics, distinct, separate, and independent. The Directory proposed for England was a worthy rival of the parent institution. Barras, Rewbell, and the rest were well matched

by Paine, Tooke, Sharpe, Thelwall, and Lansdowne.¹ Such being the temper of France, and none knew that temper better than Pitt, it might well have seemed a vain enterprise to persist in negotiation, and that Pitt did persist in hoping for peace was the best proof of his sincerity.

Nor was the temper of France the only obstacle in Pitt's path. His attempts to treat with France were most

¹ The plan of the French rulers for the disposition of Great Britain and Ireland was not without its humour. They proposed to levy *contributions patriotiques*, to the amount of 400,000 guineas a-piece upon the Dukes of Norfolk, Bedford, Bridgewater, and Marlborough. Those of the nobility and rich proprietors who did not lose their heads were to be deported, together with all manufacturers who would not bring their industries over to France. Not even Fox escaped. He, too, was condemned to transportation, on the ground that he was a *faux patriote, ayant souvent insulté la Nation française dans ses discours, et particulièrement en 1786*. That is exquisite, and one hopes that this "secret intelligence" was brought to his ears.

often opposed by the King, who found in Burke and Windham the warmest partisans. When—in 1796—Pitt despatched Lord Malmesbury to Paris, he acted against the advice of many of his friends. The negotiation, moreover, opened under the worst auspices. The passport demanded by a neutral power for the English representative was refused, and the King told no more than the truth when he said that, “if such a communication will not rouse the British lion, he must have lost his wonted energy.” But Pitt was not disheartened, and with Lord Grenville he took what the King termed “a further step of humiliation,” in sending a declaration to France by a flag of truce. And, when Lord Malmesbury arrived in Paris, the feeling of the people inspired so little confidence, that he and his suite were forced to wear the national cockade when they

went abroad, to save themselves from insult. The discussion of terms led to an inevitable difference, and after two months had been wasted in idle talk, Lord Malmesbury was ordered to leave the French capital within forty-eight hours. The Directory, of course, had never intended peace; indeed, in the very moment of negotiation Hoche was preparing to invade Ireland. The King did not conceal his satisfaction at the failure, and Lord Malmesbury found what pleasure he might in escaping from an intolerable situation. "I hope I am not mistaken in thinking that we died well," he wrote; "certain I am that I quit this world without regret." But Pitt would not acknowledge the defeat of his hopes, and six months later he had reopened negotiations.

It was to Lille that Lord Malmesbury

was sent on this second desperate errand, and the Directory, noting the anxiety of the English Minister, was guilty of a foolish insult. It sent a passport, impertinent in form, and with the name in blank. Pitt was indifferent to phrase or ceremony. He wished for peace, and he meant if possible to attain it. "Be assured," he said to Malmesbury, as he set out on his mission, "that, to produce the desired result, I will stifle to the utmost every feeling of pride." Grenville was of another opinion. He thought that the proposal fell "both in tone and substance below the situation," and offered to resign. The King took Grenville's view, and with the greater sorrow acquiesced in the measure as one "of necessity, not choice." Lord Malmesbury, however, with excellent temper, played his part in a diplomatic comedy, which belied its name

only in ending badly. The conference had not been long begun when a mysterious M. le Pein, a friend of Maret, one of the French plenipotentiaries, approached the English envoy, with assurances that the Directory was asking more than it would accept, and that nothing was needed to achieve success save patience and conciliation. Henceforth the actors in the comedy are known in the documents of diplomacy by strange names. Barras and Rewbell are called "Peter" and "Paul," while beneath the innocence of "Edward" the astute Talleyrand is concealed. Maret proved the good faith of his emissary by taking his handkerchief from one pocket, passing it before his face, and putting it into another in full conference, and for a moment Malmesbury's hopes were high. But the Directory was never in earnest. There were

no terms upon which its overbearing members would have concluded peace. A more sincere attempt made by Barras and Rewbell, to sell for £450,000 what they would not grant, failed also, and then a sudden *coup d'état* put an end to the negotiation. But the fault was not Pitt's. He had used every effort to "stop a bloody and wasting war," and he was so far removed from pedantry that he would gladly have closed with the bargain suggested by Barras and Rewbell, had it been possible. Least of all did he deserve, at this or any other time, Fox's reproach, that he had sent Lord Malmesbury to France merely that his emissary might show his "diplomatic dexterity."

The truth is that Pitt throughout had sacrificed too much, not too little, to his hope of peace. He had approached the Directory, hat in hand; he had humili-

ated his country to no purpose, if with the best intentions; and it is difficult not to sympathise with the obduracy of Grenville and the King. At the next opportunity Pitt was not so easily persuaded, and no word can be said in reproach of his firmness, although the despatches in which Grenville gave it expression were maladroit both in style and substance. On the last day of the year 1799, Bonaparte, who had been for six weeks First Consul, addressed a letter to George III. as monarch to monarch. The letter, as Pitt said, was "very civil in its terms." The First Consul showed himself, as always, a master of rhetoric. "The war which, for eight years," said he, "has ravaged the four quarters of the world, must it be eternal? Are there no means of coming to an understanding?" The answer to this letter was, according

to diplomatic usage, signed not by the King but by Grenville, and was addressed to Talleyrand, not to the First Consul. The overture was declined on the ground that the French system of government held out no security for peace and social order. "The best and most natural pledge," said Grenville, "would be the restoration of that line of princes, which for so many years maintained the French nation in prosperity at home and in consideration and respect abroad." And having thus insisted on the restoration of the Bourbons, the despatch proceeded to contradict itself. "But, desirable as that event must be," it went on, "both to France and to the world, it is not to this mode exclusively that his Majesty limits the possibility of secure and solid pacification. His Majesty makes no claim to prescribe to France what shall

be the form of her government." Bonaparte's answer was effective enough. The First Consul does not doubt that his Britannic Majesty recognises the right of nations to choose the form of their government, "since it is from the exercise of this right that he holds the crown"; thereafter he repeats that "the voice of nations, of humanity, implores the conclusion of the war"; and proposes a suspension of hostilities and a meeting of plenipotentiaries at Dunkirk. Grenville once more refuses the offer, and there the matter ends.

The advantage, on paper, remained with Bonaparte. His letters were, in effect, a manifesto addressed not to England merely, but to France, and to Europe. As Pitt said, he revived all the arguments used by all the Opposition speakers. Like the cunning journalist that he could prove himself when

the opportunity served, he declared again that France was never the aggressor, and that all her wars had been thrust upon her by others. He adopted the lofty tone of a philanthropist, and assured the world through England that he cared for nothing so much as for the benefits of commerce and the happiness of families. That he was sincere need not be supposed for one moment. Had he expected peace, in all probability he would have advocated it with less earnestness. But he was not yet quite sure of his position. He had suffered a reverse at Acre; Suvarow had swept Italy; and the Dutch fleet had been captured at the Helder. What he needed above all was popularity, and if we may believe his own confession, it was popularity which he intended to win by his letter to George III. Were that so, then he attained his end,

and stood before his countrymen as the foiled champion of peace.

Pitt, on the other hand, if we ascribe to him, as we may, the responsibility for Grenville's letters to Talleyrand, did the right thing in the wrong way. The didactic tone which distinguishes these documents was wholly out of place. Both by precept and example, the English Minister had proved that he no longer regarded the Bourbons as the only possible rulers of France. As early as 1795 he had foreseen that the crisis in France would "lead sooner or later to negotiation with some form of government different from monarchy," and both at Paris and at Lille he had given practical proof of the justice of his opinion. Why, then, should he have permitted Grenville thus to advocate the claims of a Royal Family which had shown itself

both timid and irresolute? It could but have one result: to consolidate the power of Bonaparte, and to increase the faith of the French people in its new leader.

But, if the step was wrongly taken, there can be no doubt that it was taken in the right direction. Pitt had already suffered in his pride and prestige by a too eager willingness to negotiate, and with the years had grown more cautious. He knew that nothing was yet fixed in France, neither men nor things. Bonaparte had been Consul for six weeks, and there was no ground for the belief that he would keep his place longer than his predecessors had kept theirs. Moreover, Bonaparte demanded not a general peace, but a peace between England and France, and to this England could not in honour consent. And, even if Bonaparte's offer had not

been patently insincere, there would have been a sound reason for rejecting it. The state of England had changed since 1797. If adequate security could not be obtained by treaty, the Minister knew full well that he had the means of prosecuting the contest without difficulty or danger. With an increased revenue and a vast accession of wealth the public credit had improved. Commerce and manufactures were alike far more prosperous than before, and truly it was not the moment to risk another humiliation and to court another buffet of insolence and bad faith. When Pitt defended his conduct before the House of Commons he told the truth, which Grenville's despatch had obscured, with simplicity and directness. "As a sincere lover of truth," said he, "I will not sacrifice it by grasping at the shadow, when the reality is not sub-

stantially within my reach. *Cur igitur pacem nolo? Quia infida est, quia periculosa, quia esse non potest.*" And so, when in 1801 he laid down the seals of office, he had fought the fight with spirit and energy, but the goal of peace after which he had striven from the first was still to reach.

CHAPTER IV.

SEDITION AT HOME.

UNTIL the outbreak of the French Revolution, Pitt was the avowed, the ardent, friend of reform. As has been said, he had spoken and voted for the abolition of rotten boroughs and for electoral purity. He would, under happy circumstances, have placed a free and generous trust in the people. But suddenly confronted with what he deemed a national danger, he saw no other course than to suppress his ambition, and to prefer the security of the country before the benefits of an

academic reform. For ten years, then, he ruled Great Britain with a stern face and a high hand, and in consequence he has been most improperly pilloried by the Whigs as a traitor to his own convictions and a vile oppressor of the people.

To understand the problem which he was asked to solve, a brief summary of the facts is necessary. When the Marseillais and the mob of Paris threw off the yoke of government, lofty-minded poets and sanguine pamphleteers hailed the advent of a golden era. A friendship for man, that vague and purposeless impulse, inspired enthusiasts to condone the worst excesses wreaked upon men. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey expressed with perfect sincerity the joy wherewith the downfall of a throne inspired them. And as the French progressed from bru-

talities to brutality, English approval kept pace with them. The doctrine "war with kings" and "peace with nations" was preached to eager ears on either side the Channel. The "mercy" which filled the gutters of Paris with blood, the "humanity" which elevated the guillotine to the calendar of the Saints, a "fraternity" of the kind which united Cain and Abel, were regarded as the best and noblest proofs of emancipation, while freedom was belauded not as a privilege to be enjoyed, but as an abstract quality which should be imposed upon unwilling peoples at the sword's point.

Whatever was done or said in Paris was instantly reflected in Great Britain. When France took up arms to prove her love of universal brotherhood, the friends of freedom hailed her successes with a triumphant joy. The leaders of the Whig faction made no attempt to con-

ceal their delight at the victories of Dumouriez. Fox, as we have seen, looked upon the taking of the Bastille as the greatest episode in history, and the battle of Valmy stirred his blood like a trumpet-call. "No public event," he wrote, "not excepting Yorktown and Saratoga, ever happened that gave me so much delight. I would not allow myself to believe it for some days, for fear of disappointment." And from words, the apostles of revolution passed to deeds—to such things, at least, as appear "deeds" to mischievous visionaries. Addresses of congratulation were presented to the National Assembly. Englishmen acted in concert with France; they held an active correspondence with the affiliated societies of Jacobins; they idolised the Convention; and by the Convention they were received, encouraged, and cherished.

The egregious Tom Paine,¹ whose crude revilings appropriately became the gospel of the Jacobins, was made not merely a French citizen, but a French legislator. A vast literature, manufactured in Paris, was sent over to England, that the minds of the ignorant might be corrupted. "Dr Priestley is at Paris," wrote an agent of the Foreign Office in 1792, "and is consulted on all occasions by the new Ministers; a Mr Wilson from Manchester, a Mr Oswald from Scotland, Mr Mackintosh and Mr Stone, are busily engaged in the

¹ A collector of secret intelligence, who crossed from Dover to Calais with Tom Paine, thus describes him: "He is the very picture of a journeyman tailor who has been drunk and playing at nine-pins for the first three days of the week and is returning to his work on Thursday." On landing in France, the new citizen thanked his constituents of the *Pas de Calais*; he said "he had ever been a friend to the rights of man, and hoped he should continue to be so." And though a French legislator, he spoke in English!

fabrication of democratic papers, which are to be printed at Paris and sent over to England and Ireland." It is not surprising, therefore, that Burke, always the friend of melodrama, should have thrown a dagger, one of 3000 bespoke in Birmingham, on the floor of the House of Commons, as a specimen of what England had to gain from an alliance with France. It is as little surprising that a patriotic Minister should have taken what measures he could to keep the French infection out of the country.

Meanwhile the champions of "freedom," to increase their danger to the country, organised themselves into clubs and societies. These were without number and of many kinds. First came the Friends of the People, among whom were Grey, Sheridan, and Lauderdale, and whom Fox supported, like the efficient buttress that he was, from the

outside. Their ostensible object was to pass a Reform Bill, but they were, one and all, ready to mimic the licence of France, and to embarrass their own Government in a time of stress. Then there were the Constitutional Society and the Reform Society, which gave public dinners on the 14th of July, and openly avowed their sympathy with revolution. Still worse were the London Corresponding Society and the Society for Constitutional Information, which were tireless in distributing incendiary pamphlets and rebellious manifestoes. The works of Tom Paine being their evangel, they were ardently desirous of instructing the soldiers and sailors of England in the rights of man, and the mutiny at the Nore was largely due to their amiable ministrations. It was easy for them, when their dupes went further than they wished, to de-

plore the excesses which they themselves had provoked, but they are no more easily absolved at the bar of history than they were in the eyes of the ever-vigilant Minister.

Before long every big city had its branch of this or that society, sworn, in the stirring words of the National Convention, "to abolish all taxes, nobility, and every privilege." At Manchester the extravagance of Dr Priestley led to a riot. The loyalists destroyed the doctor's house and library, and the wanton destruction was naturally set down to the wicked malice of Pitt himself. But it was in Scotland that the friends of disorder most gloriously distinguished themselves. There was set up in Edinburgh a poor travesty of Paris. The political tinkers and their dupes, who met at Mason's Lodge, Blackfriars Wynd, were all "emancipate and loos'd."

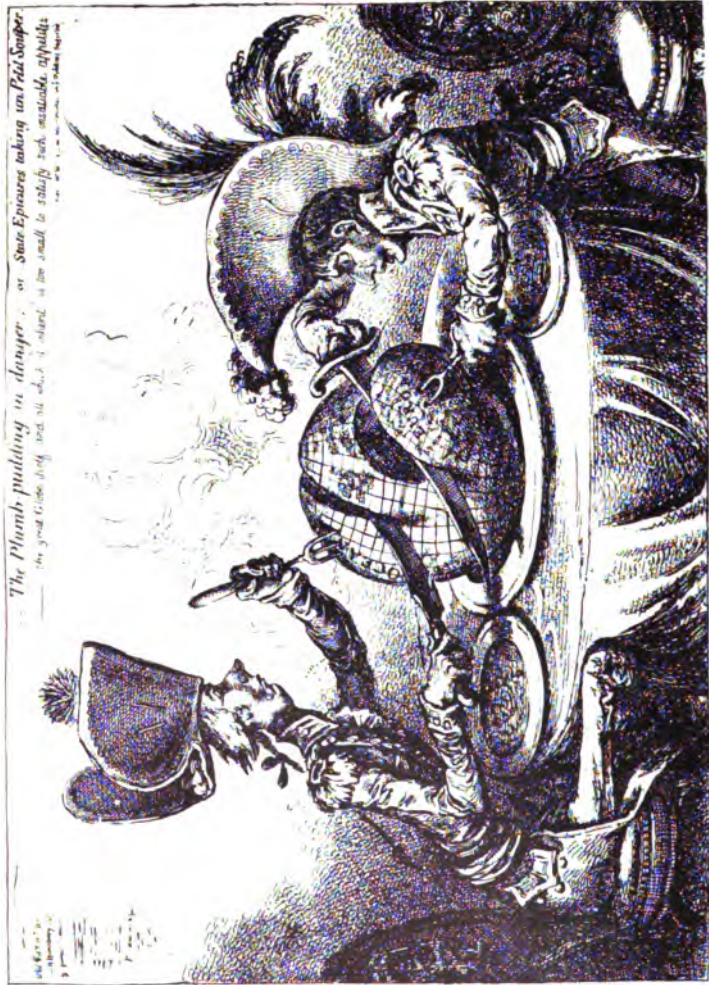
They called themselves a Convention, and they did their best to behave as such. They indulged in much braggart talk concerning tocsins and the slavery of the people. Their hero was Thomas Muir, already under sentence of transportation, and one of their earliest resolutions was that "two members be appointed to dine with Mr Muir every day while the Convention meets, at the expense of the Convention." Unhappily they could only proceed by means of Committees, and, as Citizen Lord Daer observed,—they were all Citizens who went to Blackfriars Wynd,—a dependence on Committees was "aristocratical."

But the habit of the Conventicle was too strong upon the Scots for the enjoyment of perfect liberty. They declined to accept the new religion sent over post-haste from France. So

little did they understand the immorality of titular distinctions, that the Rev. Citizen Douglas was an active member of their society. Moreover, they declined to meet on Sundays, they opened their proceedings with prayer, and at every convenient pause in the argument they made a collection. Indeed, had they not been strengthened by some stalwart patriots from London—Margarot,¹ Sinclair, and Gerrald—they would have done little credit to their French allies or to the teaching of Tom Paine.

The leaders of the Society in London were more highly cultivated than their brothers in Edinburgh. Horne Tooke, Thelwall, and Holcroft were of the

¹ Citizen Margarot deserves our gratitude for one admirable quotation. "As Horace says," he exclaimed, in denouncing Pitt and his minions, "*quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat.*" That's what it was to be a citizen and a Jacobin!



by Gilbey.

From a Caricature

number, but their superior intelligence did not persuade them to employ a wiser method. The evidence given in the celebrated trial of Hardy is a fine anthology of revolutionary extravagance. We are told of a mock play-bill with this amiable heading: "A new and entertaining farce, called *La Guillotine*, or *George's Head in a Basket*." Thelwall was the poet of the movement, and here is a specimen of the songs wherewith the down-trodden slaves of England kept up their spirits:—

"Plant, plant the tree, fair freedom's tree,
'Midst dangers, wounds, and slaughter;
Each patriot's breast its soil shall be,
And tyrants' blood its water.

But they were not content with doggerel. One witness swore that pikes, ten inches long, and fluted like a bayonet, were made at Sheffield for the brethren, as well as some murderous im-

plements, called night-cats, which were ingeniously designed to be thrown into the street for the discomfiture of the cavalry. In brief, Great Britain was honeycombed with sedition, and it was due solely to the energy of the Government that London also did not boast its reign of terror.

Not for one moment did Pitt give the English Jacobins the chance of victory. He fought them with the same fixity of purpose wherewith he fought their allies across the Channel. Two methods of attack were possible. The existing laws might be put in force, and special enactments passed to meet the special danger. Pitt disdained neither method. In Scotland the leaders of the Convention were prosecuted with the utmost rigour, and the heavy sentences imposed by Braxfield have ever since filled the minds of the Whigs with

horror. Thomas Muir, Maurice Margarot, and Joseph Gerrald were transported over-seas for fourteen years: the sentences, no doubt, were severe; but though the men pretended that they aimed at nothing more than annual parliaments and universal suffrage, they meant mischief, and they richly deserved their punishment. The jargon they talked was the jargon of Jacobinism, and they preached the gospel of Tom Paine to poor doited boys, who knew neither the meaning nor the consequence of words.

Nevertheless it was unfortunate for them that they were brought before Braxfield, a judge who, in honesty of purpose, knowledge of law, and roughness of speech, was the equal of Jeffreys himself. If Braxfield had a fault, it was a fault of manner, not of justice. In his summings up he ruth-

lessly brushed aside the sentimental irrelevances in which Muir and the rest indulged, while he bullied them with a ferocity from which their position should have saved them. But, as he said, they were "clever chieils," and they were "none the waur of a hanging"—hanging was Braxfield's word for any punishment; and only those who believe that the untrammelled right of foolish people to gabble treason is of greater importance than the safety of the country will blame the Judge's severity.¹ The trials which took place in London were

¹ Some of Braxfield's *obiter dicta* have aroused a greater storm of indignation even than his sentences. "A government in every country should be just like a corporation," said he in one of his charges to the jury; "and, in this country, it is made up of the landed interest, which alone has a right to be represented; as for the rabble, who have nothing but personal property, what hold has the nation of them?" This is the last word of reaction, but the judge's prejudice in this matter did not affect the guilt or innocence of the culprits.

not attended with the same scandal as those over which Braxfield presided. The prisoners, ably defended by Erskine, were acquitted. But at least it was proved in London as in Edinburgh that treason was not a mere sport for the idle; and the tedious prosecution, which ended with the enlargement of Hardy, was a salutary lesson in prudence to his fellows.

Reasonable as these prosecutions were, Pitt bears no part of their responsibility. He could no more interfere with the course of justice than the meanest of the King's subjects, and to charge him, as Macaulay has done, with inflicting cruel punishments, and instituting unjustifiable prosecutions, is to talk nonsense. Pitt neither appointed the judges nor called the juries. He was a constitutional Minister, who could not, if he would, interfere with the course of

justice. But for the special legislation, which was designed to suppress rebellion, he, and he alone, was responsible. And it must be said that he carried out his policy with perfect thoroughness. Again and again he suspended the Habeas Corpus Act. As early as December 1792 he passed an Alien Bill, and never was a wiser measure brought before Parliament. There followed presently a Traitorous Correspondence Bill, a Treasonable Practices Bill, and a Seditious Meetings Bill, which were carried triumphantly through the House. They were opposed at every stage by Fox and his friends, and Pitt has not yet lived down the odium in which their passage involved him.

But there can be no doubt that Pitt was amply justified in every step which he took. He did not hold the office of Prime Minister to illustrate a theory

of freedom, but to save the country from invasion and extinction. The friends of sedition were wont to say that the demands of the Conventions and the Societies over which they presided were just and moderate. They appealed in their own defence to the speeches of Pitt and the Duke of Richmond. Why, they asked in indignation, should not they advocate a reform of parliamentary representation as well as these Ministers? Even if they had demanded no more than Pitt, they would still have been blameworthy. To ask a right thing at a wrong time is often criminal, and to propose so violent a change as Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage when England was engaged in a death struggle with France could not be justified on any ground of expediency or morals.

But they demanded far more than

a pedantic measure of reform, which, none knew better than Pitt, was a mere cloak of lawlessness. The foolish persons who enrolled their dupes by the thousand, preached the total subversion of all governments in the well-known accent of Paris. And their apologists, not content with urging their moderation, insist also upon their folly. What could a handful of silly agitators achieve against a great state? It was their very silliness that made them a danger. A wise man may be held to argument; it is the fool who throws the bomb, or strikes the assassin's blow; and Pitt, well knowing that his measures of repression inflicted no hardship upon loyal citizens, was prudent to oppose sedition wherever he found it.

The danger, indeed, was far greater than the most of men knew. Pitt, who had eyes in every country, in every

town, did not take his severe measures from malice or revenge. And not merely did he possess intelligence, of which his adversaries knew nothing, but he was fortified with evidence given before secret committees of both Houses. It was easy for Fox and Sheridan to ask in a tone of virtuous indignation whether there was any "appearance of treason in the country now"? They knew perfectly well that Pitt could give them no answer, since secrecy is the very essence of repression. And a fuller knowledge assures us that Pitt never passed a measure which had not a just and immediate cause.

For instance, when the Alien Bill was proposed, the Whigs confidently asserted that the Jacobins of Paris had no representatives in England, and no dealings with the societies of London and Edinburgh. And then

we come upon a letter from Lord Auckland on December 7, 1792, which fully explains the Minister's action. "It is known that immense sums," he wrote, "have been distributed in England by order of the *Conseil Exécutif* to make an insurrection in different parts of the Kingdom in the last week of November, or in the first week of this month. And the villains were so confident of success that they anticipated it in Paris, and I have accordingly seen Paris bulletins and letters with all the details of a revolt in Westminster, similar to many of the horrid scenes in Paris." Would any patriotic Minister, with such information in his hands, hesitate to take what precautions he might for the safety of the country?

Another example nearer home at once explains and justifies Pitt's action. On April 20, 1798, he moved for the suspen-

sion of the Habeas Corpus Act, and on April 7 he had already set forth his motive in a letter to Grenville. "We have further accounts," he wrote, "yesterday and to-day from Manchester, showing the activity of the societies there, and furnishing clear charges of treason against four persons for administering oaths to soldiers, binding them, among other things, to assist the French, and to endeavour to establish here a Republican Government. A person will be sent down to-morrow with warrants and proper instructions to seize these persons, and, at the same time, all the secretaries of the societies whose names we know, and all other persons on whom, from information on the spot, sufficient suspicion shall attach. . . . If the evidence turns out such as I expect, it will lay unquestionable ground for the immediate suspension of the

Habeas Corpus Act, and, I think, for further and new measures."

Now, although the country, owing to Pitt's vigorous measures, was in 1798 far better disposed to good order and loyalty than it had been some years before, it is obvious, from the exploits of the Manchester "patriots," that there was still need of repression. Nor is it easy to understand the objection of the other side. Fox and his friends, having no sound arguments to advance, were forced to fall back upon sentimental generalities. They spoke eloquently of inalienable rights and privileges for which our fathers bled. They did not pretend that any injury was done to law-abiding citizens by the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. But they expressed a belief in a strange plant, which they called "freedom," and which, in their

opinion, should be tended and cultivated with the greatest care. For its proper growth they would have sacrificed the very existence of England, and they forgot, in their passion of horticulture, that even "fair freedom's tree" would have small chance of flourishing when the pikes and night-cats of the rebels had done their work.

And what was this freedom for which they pleaded so eloquently? Freedom to live at ease, without interfering with one's neighbours? That was already the privilege of every Briton. It was merely the freedom to extol anarchy and advocate rebellion, the freedom, claimed by idle and garrulous persons, to preach doctrines which they did not understand, but which they surmised might injure the State and embarrass the Government. In truth,

had not Pitt met an unusual situation with unaccustomed measures, he would not have deserved the confidence of the people. No Minister was ever more anxious for the common good, no Minister ever worked harder to relieve the inevitable pressure of scarcity and taxation. But he would not permit his well-laid plans to be upset by the vain dupes of half-educated lecturers, or by the criminal folly of those sanguine persons who helped to serve the cause of our enemies by sowing the seeds of sedition in the army and the fleet.

And Pitt, while he imposed reticence upon others, refrained himself from all legislation which might interfere with or perplex the conduct of the war. Though, as has been said, he was once a friend of reform, he knew that after the Revolution it was inopportune and ill-meant.

When, in 1792, Grey brought it before Parliament, Pitt opposed it with all his energy. Grey, of course, had no other motive than to embarrass the Government, and to find an opportunity of expressing his sympathy with France. So that, though it was a measure of which the Minister had approved, his denunciation of it at that moment was amply justified. It was not a time to make hazardous experiments in slavish obedience to the French Convention. The fraud of the petitions presented by Grey was too gross and palpable to deceive any one, and Grey himself proved, by his connection with others outside the House, that he was aiming not at an extended franchise but at the subversion of the Government. "I would rather forego for ever the advantages of reform," said Pitt, "than risk for a moment the existence of

the British Constitution." And then he ridiculed the pretensions of the sentimentalists who "talked of an abstracted right of equal representation." So far from there being one abstracted right, "there are," said he, "as many different rights as the causes which occur to diversify the modes of government."

Time has fought on the side of Pitt. More than a century has passed and our mode of government has not yet found annual parliaments and universal suffrage imperative necessities. Thus the Minister met agitation both in and out of Parliament with a firm front; he did not hesitate to punish treason in speech or in act; he protected the judges in upholding the ancient laws of the land, and he gave them new laws to administer. But he did not oppress the honest, single-

minded citizen; nor did the Jacobins of England ever suffer the affronts which France put upon their comrades abroad in the name of compulsory "freedom."

CHAPTER V.

THE UNION WITH IRELAND.

PITT, said Macaulay in a passage of unwonted praise, "was the first English Minister who formed great designs for the benefit of Ireland." To have formed these designs was at once his glory and his disaster. Ireland, who has beggared many reputations, took her toll of Pitt also. The statesman who fought Bonaparte single-handed, succumbed to the fate which overtakes all Englishmen bold enough to attempt the task of Irish reform. The people, which he attempted to serve, repaid him with a

fierce ingratitude; and his failure to reconcile the aspirations of the Catholics with the prejudices of the King drove him into retirement at a time when the country was most desperately in need of his services. But of his loyalty and single-mindedness there can be no doubt, and if he found no solution for the problem, it was because the problem was, and will always remain, insoluble.

The legislation of 1782, by which, in Grattan's phrase, "Great Britain gave up *in toto* every claim to authority over Ireland," accomplished only half its object. The severance was complete; the treaty which "should establish on a firm and solid basis the future connection of the two kingdoms" was never signed. To repair this omission had been Pitt's aim from the first. The purpose of the Commercial Resolutions, proposed in 1785, was but the general

profit of the Empire. Had he been able, Pitt would have made "England and Ireland one country in effect, though for local concerns under distinct Legislatures; *one* in the communication of advantages, and of course in the participation of burdens." The Resolutions, as we have seen, were rejected by Ireland, and the subject, which, as Pitt told the Duke of Rutland, he "had inexpressibly at heart," was thrown aside beyond the hope of discussion. By the part which Ireland played at the time of the Regency the division between the two countries was still further widened, and it seemed as though Pitt would be turned back upon the policy, which he bitterly detested, of temporary shifts and vain expedients.

And then the French Revolution threw the net of its entanglement over Ireland as over the rest of Europe. Jacobinism

was added to the other arts of rebellion. The secret societies, established in every province, were not content to plead the cause of the Catholics; they demanded also the abolition of the monarchy. Pitt, turning a deaf ear to the party of rebellion, urged a large measure of relief; and Hobart's Bill, passed in 1793, admitted the Catholics to vote at elections and to hold many civil and military offices. But concession, as always, failed to pacify the country. The Peep of Day Boys and Defenders pursued their tactics of intimidation, and Ireland was already inflammable, when the indiscretion of Lord Fitzwilliam added fuel to the fire.

At the coalition of 1794 the Duke of Portland and his friends had adopted Ireland as their special province, and they had not been long in office when they made full exaction of their privi-

lege. They demanded nothing less than that Lord Westmoreland should be recalled, and Lord Fitzwilliam sent over in his place. To this arrangement Pitt was disposed to agree on condition that Lord Westmoreland should not return to London, until a suitable office was found for him. But Lord Fitzwilliam, impatient of concealment or delay, prematurely announced his appointment to Grattan, and promised the Irish patriot a complete reversal of Westmoreland's policy. He undertook to dismiss Lord Fitzgibbon, the Chancellor, to fill the public offices with Whigs, and hinted that the last step on the road of Emancipation—the admission of the Catholics to Parliament—was as good as taken.

It would be difficult to imagine a greater piece of folly, and Pitt would have been wise instantly to cancel

the appointment. He did not cancel it. Instead he did his best to define the powers and policy of the new Lord Lieutenant. Lord Fitzwilliam, for instance, undertook that the Chancellor should not be removed; he gave explicit assurances that "he had not in view the establishment of any new system in Ireland"; on the question of granting a further concession to the Catholics, Pitt and his colleagues unanimously agreed with Lord Fitzwilliam, that he "should inform himself in Ireland as to the state and disposition of the country in this respect, and transmit that information, with his opinion, to the King's servants here; that he should, as much as possible, endeavour to prevent the agitation of the question during the present session; and that, in all events, he should do nothing in it which might commit the King's

Government here or in Ireland without fresh instructions."

The agreement was clear, but of no effect. Lord Fitzwilliam's mind was made up before ever he set foot in Ireland. Endowed with the sanguine temper of the Whigs, he believed that nothing was necessary for salvation but a change of officers and an Act of Parliament. He had already proclaimed that he intended to purify "the principles of government" with the aid of Grattan and the Ponsonbys. He made no inquiries; he did not attempt to study the state of Ireland; he went about the work with the lightheartedness of one who is sure that a sound theory is far more valuable than a knowledge of facts. Nor did he waste the precious hours. He landed in Ireland on Sunday evening (January 4, 1795); the whole of Monday he

was kept in his room by indisposition ; on Wednesday morning he dismissed Beresford, Chief Commissioner of Revenue, and a loyal adherent of Pitt. "So that," as the Chancellor wrote to Beresford, "he had one day only to inquire into the multiplied acts of malversation which he alleges against you."

The truth is that he had settled both his patronage and his measures before he left London, and he speedily forgot the promises which he had made to his colleagues. Having dismissed Beresford and others, having installed the Ponsonbys in office, he proceeded to approve the complete emancipation of the Catholics, and on February 12 Grattan brought in a Bill, the purpose of which was to throw all places open to them. A fortnight later Lord Fitzwilliam was asked to resign, and he left Ireland on the

verge of civil war. The storm which he aroused, far stronger hands than his were powerless to allay, and once more a signal injustice was done by the Whigs. To make a gift inopportune is worse than to withhold it, and Lord Fitzwilliam's sympathy did far more harm to the Catholic cause than Lord Fitzgibbon's undisguised hostility.

It is necessary to say so much, because Lord Fitzwilliam's folly made Pitt's measure of Union inevitable. The disappointment of the Catholics turned to rancour. They cared not for the disputes of Whig and Tory; they were indifferent to the difficulties imposed upon Pitt by the coalition. They knew only that they had lost a chance of carrying a cherished measure, and they were incensed equally against the English ministers and their Protes-

tant compatriots. Of the civil war which deluged Ireland with blood during the next few years little need be said. The Directory which was formed in Dublin, in servile imitation of Paris, may be passed over. Nor is it worth while to apportion the blame of torture and brutality between the Irish rebels and the English soldiers. That there were faults on both sides is evident: it is evident, also, that the English soldiers showed far more forbearance than has been commonly supposed.

The ordinary methods of restoring order were tried and failed. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended; an Insurrection Bill was introduced and carried; and at last all persons were ordered to surrender their arms. Opinions were violent and contradictory. On the one hand, Lord Moira

declared that nothing was necessary to pacify Ireland save Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform. On the other, the Chancellor pointed out that conciliation had led to nothing save outrage and rebellion. The Irish had been granted legislative independence; they had been relieved of their Penal Code; the Catholics had been admitted to the franchise. Were they satisfied with these concessions? Had the satisfaction of their demands brought a day's peace to the country? Indeed no Act of Parliament could have satisfied the Defenders. Emmett told the truth, when he owned that it was the purpose of himself and his friends "to dissolve the connection with Great Britain, to accept France only as an ally, and to establish Ireland as an independent republic."

There, indeed, was Jacobinism in full

flower. And in the autumn of 1798, after the battle of Vinegar Hill, Emmett's purpose was almost fulfilled. The French, under General Humbert, landed at Killala, and routed the Irish regiments commanded by General Lake at Castlebar; but his success was short-lived, and he presently surrendered with all his force to Lord Cornwallis.¹ During these disturbances Pitt made no attempt to devise a plan of pacification.

¹ Matthew Tone was with General Humbert, and a letter written by him at Killala on "Fructidor 6" shows the foolish simplicity with which the expedition was undertaken. "Yesterday evening we landed," writes Tone, "and drove sixty yeomen and regulars before us like sheep. A few of our grenadiers only were engaged. We killed two, and made a dozen prisoners. The people will join us in myriads; they throw themselves on their knees as we pass along, and extend their arms for our success. We will be masters of Connaught in a few days. *Erin go bragh*." In a few days he was hanged, and his illustrious brother escaped the gallows only by suicide. Here, indeed, in this idle hope and swift despair, is the tragedy of Ireland.

Absorbed in the French war and its multiple duties, he followed the easiest course. He changed his Lord-Lieutenant, and hoped for better times. To Lord Fitzwilliam there succeeded Lord Camden, who, in his turn, gave way to Lord Cornwallis; and thus, as always, devastating alternations of severity and conciliation have compassed the ruin of Ireland.

The government of Cornwallis found both warm supporters and violent opponents. These denounced his levity as weakness; those believed that he was taking the wisest steps towards peace and good will. But, meanwhile, Pitt had set his mind upon a great constructive measure, which was nothing less than the Union of the English and Irish Parliaments. He took alarm at the increasing Jacobinism of Dublin, and believed that the security of the

Empire was threatened. "I feel very impatient to hear something more on the subject of the Union," he writes in August 1798 to Grenville, "and have been ruminating on some new ideas on the subject, which I will endeavour to put upon paper." Two months later he is full of hope; he has had two conversations with Lord Clare, whose opinion is so encouraging that Pitt looks forward to passing the Union without much difficulty.

He was doomed, for a time at least, to disappointment. The Union was violently opposed in Dublin. The lawyers and merchants called meetings, and "cried down the measure." Foster, the speaker, who had so zealously supported Pitt's Commercial Resolutions in 1785, now threw the weight of his influence into the opposite scale. On January 22, 1799 the measure came be-

fore the Irish Parliament. The Lords carried it by a majority of 34. In the Commons the majority in its favour was only 2, and for the time at least it was perforce abandoned. "The curtain is dropped on the Union," wrote the Marquis of Buckingham to Lord Grenville; and he believed that the curtain would never be rung up again until the Viceroy was recalled. "Lord Castlereagh has worked like a horse," said he, "but his principal is a dead weight that bears down everything." This, however, is an expression not of judgment but of malice, and, in spite of the Marquis of Buckingham, Lord Cornwallis remained in office to witness the triumph of a united Parliament.

In London the question had been fully discussed. Before the news of what amounted to defeat had come from Dublin, Pitt had already de-

livered an eloquent speech in favour of the Union. Nor did defeat deter him from the performance of his task. A week later he defended his Resolutions in a finished oration, which, after a lapse of more than a century, might still serve as a text for the friends of the Union. Accepting it as a truth granted by all parties that a perpetual connection between Great Britain and Ireland was essential to the interests of both, he showed that this connection had been attacked as well by foreign traitors as by domestic enemies. It was, indeed, this open and avowed attack which urged him to hasten the Union by all means in his power. The common foes of the two kingdoms knew where was the vulnerable point, and attacked it with all the courage and energy which was theirs. The laws which had been enacted or proposed in the past had failed or proved

ineffectual. The adjustment of 1782 was the mere demolition of a former system, and upon the waste ground no new edifice was built. When, three years later, Ireland rejected the chance of commercial unity, she made the division between the two countries yet sharper. "If this infatuated country gives up the present offer," had said the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Ireland, "she may look for it again in vain." Here, said Pitt, the Chancellor was happily mistaken. The offer was made again in a larger, more generous spirit.

But the refusal of the English propositions in 1785 had done more than injure the trade of Ireland. It had encouraged a commercial jealousy, in which were planted the very seeds of separation, and which must be abolished if the two peoples were to dwell in peace. Com-

mercial unity had failed. Nothing then was left, but "the best and most effectual remedy—a legislative Union." And this Union could not be deferred until the signing of a peace, because the crisis of the war made it more than ever necessary. Nor was the moment inopportune for the prosperity of Ireland. The advantage of commercial supremacy, which during the war Great Britain had won by her fleet, would instantly be shared by the sister kingdom; the security of Ireland would be assured by the British arms; and even her religious dissensions would be calmed when the Protestant legislature was not local but imperial.

But while he urged the benefits of his measure with all his eloquence, Pitt was not unsympathetic to the Irish objections. He noted, with perfect candour, a laudable, if mistaken,

sense of national pride. And he declared that if that sense of pride were pushed to its full extent, there was an end of all civil society. County might against county, city against city. "Does a Union, under such circumstances," he asked, "by free consent, and in just and equal terms, deserve to be branded as a proposal for subjecting Ireland to a foreign yoke? Is it not rather the free and voluntary association of two great countries, which join for their common benefit in one great empire, where each will retain its proportional weight and importance, under the security of equal laws, reciprocal affection, and inseparable interests, and which want nothing but that indissoluble connection to render both invincible?" A fine argument, fittingly concluded by the quotation from the Classics, which was ever the climax and embellishment of Pitt's eloquence :

"Non ego, nec Teucris Italos parere jubebo,
Nec nova regna peto : paribus se legibus ambæ
Invictæ gentes æterna in foedera mittant."

During the whole of the Irish controversy Pitt stood upon the highest plane of statesmanship. He was no mere politician, attempting to win popularity; he was a great Minister, intent to solve a difficult problem and to avert a threatening danger. While he wished to protect England against the schemes of France, in all good faith he was sure that he was conferring a greater benefit upon Ireland. The object of his measure was, said he, "to communicate to the sister kingdom the skill, the capital, and the industry which have raised this country to such a pitch of opulence." And again: "We must show that we are not grasping at financial advantages, that we are not looking for

commercial monopoly; we must show that we wish to make the Empire more powerful and more secure by making Ireland more free and more happy." If there seemed a difference in interest between the two nations, the balance must always incline to the side of Ireland: "Justice requires that the greater share of advantage should fall to the less powerful."

Throughout his speeches there is this same tone of hope and magnanimity; and the only reproach, which he could justly incur, was made in Grattan's last speech. "In all that is advanced," said the patriot, "the Minister does not argue, but foretells. Now, you cannot answer a prophet; you can only disbelieve him." But if Pitt were a prophet, he was a practical prophet, and in its essence his forecast was true. The Union was not a panacea

for Ireland's woes—that may be admitted. The wit of man never has changed, and will never change, the soil of a country or the human heart. The misfortunes of Ireland are as much her heritage as her gay and sensitive temper, and neither can be taken away by the will of a statesman. At the same time, the security of the Empire was increased immeasurably by the wisdom of Pitt, and, despite the cunning of agitators, that security has not yet been taken from us.

But if anything were needed to prove Pitt's good faith it might be found in his ready acceptance of 100 Irish members into the Imperial Parliament. It is plain that he had no fear of over-representation. "I think we are entitled to say,"—thus he argued,—“that if a nation becomes united with us in interests and affection, it is but

a matter of small importance whether the number of representatives from one part of the united empire be greater or less." Had the premise been sound the conclusion might have been sound also. But it is impossible to regard the House of Commons of to-day without acknowledging that in one respect time has proved Pitt a false prophet.

While Pitt's measure was discussed in London, Cornwallis and Castlereagh were doing their utmost to win the Irish to their side. The full resources of political intrigue, such as it was understood a century ago, were employed to attain the object so ardently desired. Peerages were promised, offices were distributed, and it was even whispered that Pitt's gold found its way into Irish pockets. Those who believe that everything is wrong that is not the custom of their own time

have denounced the author of the Union as a monster of corruption. They have drawn harrowing pictures of honest patriots basely seduced to sell their freedom to the foreigner. They have represented the emissaries of England as the stealthy purchasers of treason.

Now, in all these pictures and representations there is a suggestion of falsehood as well as a suppression of the truth. Peerages and offices were then, as now, the common rewards of political loyalty. The Irish Parliament had been corrupt before Pitt proposed a Union with England. Cornwallis and Castlereagh used the instruments that were ready to their hands, and incurred no more blame than the Minister whose policy they carried out. Cornwallis, being a soldier and not a politician, deplored the circumstances, strange to him, in which he was placed.

"My occupation," he wrote, "is now of the most unpleasant nature, negotiating and jobbing with the most corrupt people under heaven. I despise and hate myself every hour for engaging in such dirty work, and am supported only by the reflection that without a Union the British Empire must be dissolved." Castlereagh, on the other hand, believed so strongly in his mission that he made no scruple of the means employed. It was his business, said he, "to buy out, and secure for the Crown for ever, the fee simple of Irish corruption, which has so long enfeebled the powers of Government and endangered the connection."

There was one method of securing the Union, adopted by Pitt, to which no objection can be found, even by the pedant—the purchase of the rotten boroughs. These had always been regarded by

Pitt, in England as in Ireland, a species of property, and to offer their owners a fair price for their privileges was not corruption, but a fair bargain. There remains only the suspicion of actual bribery, and this must remain a suspicion. It is possible, in the temper of those times, that money was offered and taken for the purchase of votes, but it is not certain, and it must have been inconsiderable. In January 1800, after an urgent request from Lord Cornwallis, no more than £5000 was sent to Ireland for the purposes of secret service, and it is clear, when we remember that spies innumerable had to be satisfied from the fund, that the balance, devoted to bribery, must have been small. In conclusion, it is absurd to blame either Pitt or his lieutenants too gravely for "corrupting" the Irish. Were it to do over again,

we should be debarred, by the higher standard of to-day, from using the means which Pitt thought it no shame to use. But he did no more than follow the practice of his age, and the justification of his method was its success.

The question of Catholic Emancipation was still unanswered. From the very outset it was tacitly understood, though no pledge was given, that Catholics should be permitted to sit in the Imperial Parliament, and to hold offices from which hitherto they had been debarred. So much is clear from the gossip and correspondence of the time. When Castlereagh declared that "the whole Catholic question was to be kept out of the measure," the Marquis of Buckingham answered that, "unless the Catholics understand distinctly that the door is left open, the

measure cannot pass." One Irish Commissioner, Crosbie by name, defended the measure on the ground, among others, that "the Catholic question would, of course, be put an end to." The Catholic bishops, moreover, held a meeting in Dublin, and "unanimously agreed to support the Union, and to write to their clergy to warn their flocks against tumultuous assemblies," from which it is evident that they looked forward to the fulfilment of their wishes.

But a vague hope is a very different thing from a positive assurance, and no positive assurance was ever given by Pitt. In the speeches in which he supported the Union, he spoke no word of encouragement to the Catholics. He excluded, with perfect frankness and evident purpose, all consideration of the claims that had been made. There was no necessary or immediate connection between

the Union of the Parliaments and Catholic Emancipation. Indeed the speech which Pitt delivered on April 21, 1800, in moving the first resolution, expressly disclaimed any desire of reform. Having pronounced a eulogy on the Constitution of Great Britain, which, said he, "had resisted all the efforts of Jacobinism, sheltering itself under the pretence of a love of liberty," as well as "against the open attacks of its enemies and against the more dangerous reforms of its professed friends," he proceeded to discover the "inmost thoughts of his mind." "I think it right," said he, "to declare my most decided opinion, that, even if the times were proper for experiment, any, even the slightest, change in such a Constitution must be considered as an evil." If these words express no more than a general disapproval of reform,

it is impossible to wrest from them a hope for the Irish. In April, then, Pitt's speech and action were untrammelled; in July, the Union received the royal assent, and no word was said of Catholic Emancipation; six months later the Minister was in open conflict with the King, and, rather than abandon a measure which he thought essential for the welfare of Ireland, had resigned.

Few events in history have aroused a bitterer controversy than Pitt's resignation. It has been ascribed to meanness and to ambition. Some historians declare that he threw down the reins of office because he loved power better than his country, — a foolish statement which confutes itself. Others, with greater plausibility and a complete misunderstanding of the man's character, assure us that he resigned that another hand

might sign the peace. That was the view of Lord Malmesbury. "It looks at times to me," said Malmesbury, "as if Pitt was playing a very selfish, and, in the present state of affairs, a very criminal part; that he goes out to show his strength, and under the certain expectation of being soon called upon again to govern the country with uncontrolled power." Malmesbury must have studied his friend to little purpose, if, after fifteen years' companionship, he could have taken so sordid a view of his conduct. Pitt had always been the friend of peace, and he was far too careless of popularity to leave the signing of a treaty to others. Moreover, there were not in his nature the seeds of hypocrisy. He had faced the world for seventeen years with a candid front, and he did not now take his first lesson in falsehood.

The simple explanation is, as usual, the true one. Though he had always declined to engage his word, Pitt had recognised from the outset that the Union of the Parliaments would remove the greatest obstacle which lay in the path of Emancipation. He was of opinion that it would in no way prejudice the Constitution of Great Britain if the privilege which they asked were granted to the Catholics. Accordingly in the autumn of 1800 he prepared a measure, by which a test of loyalty, not of religion, should be imposed upon Members of Parliament. He imparted his scheme to his colleagues, and all might have been well but for the perfidy of the Chancellor, Lord Loughborough. This astute politician thought he saw a chance of benefiting himself at Pitt's expense, and, knowing full well the violently adverse opinion which George

III. held concerning the Emancipation of the Catholics, he assiduously poisoned the King's mind.

The task was not difficult. The King believed, with all the obstinacy of his shrewd and narrow mind, that if he admitted Catholics to Parliament he would violate the oath which he took at his Coronation, and would, in fact, be guilty of perjury. Dundas had already attempted to change his mind, making a distinction between the King in his executive capacity and the King as part of the legislature. But George III. would not have it. "None of your Scotch metaphysics, Mr Dundas," he had replied, "none of your Scotch metaphysics." When the Chancellor, therefore, betrayed Pitt's intention, he raked the ashes of smouldering indignation. From September to January the King's anger increased,

and when at last Pitt laid his scheme before him, as he thought for the first time, he met with an invincible opposition. The King declined to discuss a proposition which thus tended to destroy "the groundwork of our happy Constitution," and he would do no more than promise that, if Pitt would "stave off the only question whereon he feared they could never agree, . . . he would certainly abstain from talking on the subject."

There, briefly, is the whole matter. At open variance with the King, what could Pitt do but resign? As Lord Rosebery most admirably says, "what war is to kings, resignation is to ministers: it is the *ultima ratio*." Pitt had determined to give a measure of relief to the Catholics. He had been prevented by treachery from approaching his King in his own way and at his own time. He

had been confronted with an opinion inflexible as his own, and he believed it incompatible with his pride and dignity to yield. Many a Minister has resigned with far less provocation, and that Pitt had no thought beyond Catholic Emancipation is clear from his intimate conversation and correspondence. When he spoke and wrote to Rose or Wilberforce he uttered no word of place or power.¹ Single-minded, now

¹ Lord Sidmouth had no great love for Pitt, and yet he put no sinister meaning to Pitt's resignation, as is evident from the following conversation with Croker:—

“I asked whether the Catholic question”—thus Croker wrote in 1838—“was not rather the colour than the cause of Pitt's resignation, and whether his real object was not to have peace made, and then to return to power. Lord Sidmouth said no; that the Catholic question was the real, and, he believed, the sole cause of Pitt's retirement. ‘In fact, I cannot call it retirement, for the King positively dismissed him,’ when Pitt in the closet declared that he could not recede from his proposition for Emancipation. He added some details (from

as always, he accepted his defeat and resigned his generalship. And thus was brought to an unhappy conclusion a period of office, of which our annals show no rival in length of time, in magnanimous devotion, in splendid achievement. The King, knowing that it was not in his power to reward so faithful a servant, addressed a letter to "my dear Pitt," and by this unique form, upon a unique occasion, showed that if he were obstinate he was yet a king.

the King) of Pitt's last interview on this occasion, and concluded by saying that the King's dismissal of Pitt (though kind in manner) was decisive in tone, and took him (Pitt) quite by surprise."

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST YEARS.

Perr's resignation, though its motive is clear, was none the less deplorable. He left the service of his country at a moment of crisis, and he left it for an insufficient reason. It is true that, having once urged Catholic Emancipation upon the King, he could not have drawn back. His office and his independence forbade submission. But need he have put the King's forbearance to the test? The claims of the Catholics were not pressing. As we have seen, no scruple of honour was involved: the

Minister had merely expressed sympathy; he had given no pledge. Politics is not, like mathematics, an exact science. The justice of a measure is an imperfect excuse for bringing it forward. It was Pitt's own favourite doctrine that opportunity was the essence of administration. None knew better than he that what is profitable to-day may be dangerous to-morrow, and the hazardous question of Emancipation might have been deferred until the time of peace.

When so much remained to do, it was idle to indulge in controversial legislation. Jacobinism still held Europe in its grip, and would, if it could, have fastened upon England. There was but one man competent to fight Bonaparte, and that was Pitt, and we cannot look back upon the events of 1801 without a pitiful regret. Moreover, though the charges of extrava-

gant ambition and shallow hypocrisy cannot be sustained, it is impossible not to see in Pitt's conduct a weakening of purpose, a loosening of grasp. Five years before he would have dominated, not bowed to, circumstances. He would have tested the purpose of the King before he revealed his own, or he would have changed the King's mind. But now he retired worsted from the fight, at a time when England was in peril and had need of him.

Having resigned, he did what he believed patriotism required of him: he promised to give Addington a loyal support. To make it evident that no promise was broken, that no one's honour was at stake, he urged his old colleagues to retain their offices. He could not have taken a more unfortunate step. For thus he threw the protecting ægis of his high position over the pusil-

lanimous measures of an incompetent Minister. And so long as Addington shielded himself behind the great name of Pitt, he was immune from criticism.

The friends of Pitt, though they chafed under the restraint, thought they best served their leader by silence. His enemies poured contempt upon his past achievements by belauding his successor, and Addington was neither loyal enough nor intelligent enough to reject the flattery of ill-meaning partisans. At the outset it was understood that he took office because a difference of opinion separated Pitt from the King, and, if he accepted the advice of his predecessor, he should have been ready to give back the seals of office at the first hint of reconciliation. An occasion came even before he had assumed the reins of Government. In March 1801 the King fell ill again, and on his

recovery laid the whole blame of the disease upon Pitt, who, feeling acutely the suffering which he had caused, promised that he would never again introduce the Catholic question. Here, then, was an opportunity of agreement. The sole obstacle being removed, Pitt was ready, even eager, to resume office, and Addington might have retired in Pitt's favour without loss of honour or dignity. But Addington was Prime Minister; he had already forgotten the intrigue which had put him in office; he sternly refused to relinquish a post which he had unexpectedly won, and thus a golden chance was lost.

Moreover, he presently assumed the credit for Pitt's energy and foresight. The glorious battle of the Baltic, the triumphant expedition to Egypt, planned to their smallest detail by Pitt, did an undeserved honour to the new

Administration. The Peace of Amiens,—which reflects infinite credit upon Bonaparte's diplomacy, and whose only excuse in the eyes of Englishmen should be that it did not last long,—could not have been signed without Pitt's aid, and enormously increased Addington's popularity. The Doctor, in truth, as Canning called him, soon believed himself a great statesman, and accepted the flattery of George III. as a tribute not to the hop-pillow which he had prescribed, but to his political sagacity. Though he took Pitt's advice, he did not think it his business to defend his benefactor in the House of Commons. When Tierney, for instance, to prove his zeal for the new Ministry, charged Pitt with extravagance, Addington uttered no word of protest. The situation, indeed, was galling both to Pitt and to his friends; but, so long as Pitt believed himself

bound in honour to assist Addington, change was impossible.

Among those who declined to obey Pitt in retaining their offices under Addington was George Canning, who, in his letters to Frere,¹ deplored what he believed the ruin of England with all the fury and eloquence at his command. Indignant at Pitt's resignation, which he thought a betrayal, Canning assailed his leader with a lively candour, and, receiving a frigid answer, believed that his intercourse with Pitt was closed for ever. It seemed to him, quite erroneously, that there had been "a complete and unreserved sacrifice of him to Addington." Nevertheless, though he wrote under the passion of disappointment, he clearly discerned the true cause of Pitt's action. This he

¹ See 'John Hookham Frere and his Friends,' by Gabrielle Festing.

attributed to "a want of determination when he began to act, how far he should go, or what line he should take, but a hesitation to own that he was so undetermined; and *then* a zeal, not originally felt by him, which kindled as he went on, for the real, as well as the ostensible, support of his new creation."

Thus it is that men follow a wrong course the more pertinaciously because it is wrong, as though their ardour in some way excused their folly. But gradually Canning's heart softened. His loyalty was strong enough to bear even the greater strain which the Peace of Amiens put upon it. "God forgive Pitt for the hand he has had in it," he exclaimed, and found what comfort he might in remembering that he himself had "no share whatever, art or part," in the transaction. But when

he expostulated, "his Honour smiled," and things went from bad to worse. "Pitt is lost," he says a little later; "A. has used him like a dog." And so he found refuge "in plaguing the Doctor," and in hoping for the day when Pitt should understand that the duty which he owed his country was greater than the promise to which Addington held him.

But, despite the state of the country, despite the perfidy of the Doctor, Pitt found in retirement a certain satisfaction. For the first time in his life he was at leisure to entertain his friends and to enjoy the solace of the Classics. And now and again there fell upon his ear a welcome echo from the outer world. Determined as he was to efface himself, he could not but have been pleased by the signal honour paid him by the House of Commons. On May 7,

1802, a Member of Parliament named Nicholls "felt it his duty, on public grounds, to draw the attention of the House to the misconduct and delinquency of the late Administration, and more particularly to the criminality of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer." This was too good a chance for the friends of Pitt to lose, and Lord Belgrave moved an amendment, which, to use Canning's words, he presently "softened into a general resolution of all mankind, the Army, Navy, Pulpit, Bar, and Stage."

The amendment was triumphantly carried, but it was not definite enough to please Canning, who persuaded St John Mildmay to propose another, to the effect "that the Right Hon. William Pitt has rendered great and important services to the country, and especially deserves the gratitude of this House." This also

was accepted with acclamation, and while the fires of enthusiasm were still burning, a few country gentlemen proposed to hold a public dinner on Pitt's birthday. The scheme was unfolded to Canning, who instantly determined that it should be made "to originate in the city." There the suggestion "took like wild-fire"; the great room at the London Tavern was bespoken; and such an honour was paid to Pitt as has seldom been accorded to a Minister. And that it might never fall from the memory of man, Canning, the wisest friend and most loyal champion that ever statesman had, wrote his famous song—

"If hushed the loud whirlwind that ruffled the
deep,

The sky if no longer dark tempests deform,
When our perils are past, shall our gratitude sleep?
No—here's to the pilot that weathered the
storm!"

Even Canning was satisfied. "The

effect and impression of the dinner," he told Frere, "was altogether much more than I could have ventured to expect. . . . 820 people present, the flower of every rank and description of persons in London; the Song, taken in its true intent and meaning, repeated with increased acclamations, and the last verse called for over again,—these are, I think, the principal features by which you may judge of the tone and temper of this celebration." But the dinner was far more than an idle compliment. It was political both in its purpose and its effect. A direct invitation to Pitt that he should return to power, it brought him forward, as Canning said, "in spite of himself, on ground of his own," and it plainly showed who were devoted to Pitt for his own sake.

The Minister hesitated: Achilles still

stayed in his tent. But his friends were emboldened to press him to take office, and won the support of the Duke of York. Grenville, who had already separated himself from his old leader, had still no doubt as to the future. "To place the Government in Pitt's hands," he said, "ought to be the wish of every man who thinks it at all material to himself whether Bonaparte shall or shall not treat us in twelve months precisely in the style he has now treated the Swiss." Canning himself at last refused to keep silence, and in December 1802 delivered a noble eulogy of his friend. He declared that in times of danger the Government ought to be in the ablest and fittest hands, and he did not conceal whose were those hands. "Away with the cant," he exclaimed, "of measures, not men! the idle supposition, it is the harness and not the horses that draw

the chariot along!" He knew that to cope with Bonaparte one thing, and one thing only, was necessary: a great commanding spirit. Louder and louder grew the call for Pitt. "Retreat and withdraw as much as he will," said Canning, "he must not hope to efface the memory of his past services from the gratitude of his country; he cannot withdraw himself from the following of a nation; he must endure the attachment of a people whom he has saved."

After this public vindication, Pitt's return was inevitable. Moreover, the perfidy of Addington's friends, the vain folly of Hiley and Bragge,¹ had entirely

¹ Addington, secure of his position, had not scrupled to advance the members of his family. To his son Henry, a boy of sixteen, he gave the Clerkship of the Pells, which Pitt had once refused. His brother, Hiley Addington, was Secretary to the Treasury, and afterwards Paymaster-General, while his brother-in-law, one Bragge, was Secretary at

absolved Pitt from the duty of support. Nothing was needed but an opportunity, which, though it was sure to come, came slowly. Nor did anything add greater strength to Pitt's resolution than the declaration of war against Bonaparte, on May 16, 1803. He instantly returned to the House of Commons, and, a week later, delivered one of his most eloquent speeches in defence of the war. So long had he been absent that he spoke to two hundred members who had never heard him; and while he increased the admiration of both his old adherents and his old enemies, he gave a splendid proof

War. Canning celebrated the interested loyalty of the family in the following lines :—

“ When the faltering periods lag,
Or his yawning audience flag;
When his speeches hobble vilely,
Or the House receives them drily,
Cheer, O! cheer him, Brother Bragge!
Cheer, O! cheer him, Brother Hiley!”

of his genius to those for whom he was but a name. Fox thought it "the best speech he had ever made in that style." Even Creevey, who knew the bitterness of hate which only a henchman can know, was compelled to appreciation. "Then came the great fiend himself—Pitt," thus he wrote on May 24, 1803, "who, in the elevation of his tone of mind and composition, in the infinite energy of his style, the miraculous perspicuity and fluency of his periods, outdid (as it was thought) all former performances of his. Never, to be sure, was there such an exhibition."

But the best account of Pitt's triumph was given by the first Earl Dudley (then the Hon. J. W. Ward). "Whatever may have been its comparative merits," wrote he to Copleston, "its effects were astonishing, and, I believe, unequalled. When he came

in, which he did not until after Lord Hawkesbury had been speaking nearly an hour, all the attention of the House was withdrawn for some moments from the orator and fixed on him; and, as he walked up to his place, his name was repeated aloud by many persons, for want, I imagine, of some other way to express their feelings. Erskine and Whitbread were heard with impatience, and when, at the end of a tedious hour and a half, he rose (twenty minutes to eight), there was first a violent and universal cry of: 'Mr Pitt! Mr Pitt!' He was then cheered before he had uttered a syllable, a mark of approbation which was repeated at almost all the brilliant passages and remarkable sentiments; and when he sat down (nine) there followed three of the longest, most eager, and most enthusiastic bursts of applause

I ever heard in any place on any occasion."

The occasion was unique, and the House rose to it in a unique fashion. Never has a finer tribute been paid spontaneously to a returning Minister. For a moment the voices of jealousy and hate were silent. It was as though the spirit of patriotism had been restored by Pitt to the Commons. On either side there was a sudden recognition of impending danger, and a quick conviction that none save Pitt could avert it. To the Doctor the demonstration was an unmistakable warning that the days of his fumbling, ill-starred Ministry were numbered. There is never room in a popular assembly for a true and a false leader. Moreover, as the year waned the perplexities of the country increased. Bonaparte meditated an invasion of England, and devoted his

measureless energies to the task. Indeed, he was presently so confident of success that the medal was struck which should commemorate the sacking of the English capital, and which bore the inscription, *Frappé à Londres*.

The menace of France evoked a corresponding energy and courage in England, and Pitt was foremost in advocating proper measures of defence. The army was increased, volunteers were enrolled,—Pitt himself raised a trained corps of 3000,—and it was proposed to fortify London. The last measure, flouted by the majority, was warmly supported by Pitt. He urged the necessity of employing fortifications on the lines of internal defence, in a speech at once lucid and profound. To delay the progress of the enemy for three days was, he thought, an enterprise worth the ex-

pense and trouble of erecting defensive works. "But it is said," he observed in answer to objections, "we ought not to fortify London because our ancestors did not fortify it. We might as well be told that because our ancestors fought with arrows and lances we ought to use them now, and that we ought to consider shields and corslets as affording a secure defence against musketry and artillery."

From suggestion he rose to open attack, and the year 1804 was not many weeks old when he was determined that the safety of the country demanded the dismissal of Addington. On March 15 he called for information concerning the Navy, and contrasted the energy which he himself had shown in 1794, 1797, and 1801, with the criminal supineness of Addington's Ministry at a moment of far greater danger. The vessels,

peculiarly fitted for shoal water, which under his auspices were built in ten weeks, were now promised in six months, though the enemy was but waiting for a favourable moment for making a descent upon the English coast. Since the present Lords of the Admiralty had come into office "only two ships of the line had been contracted for to be built in the merchants' yards." He therefore asked for an account of the ships which had been in commission on December 31, 1793, on September 30, 1801, and December 31, 1803. The account was refused, and Pitt, conscious of the country's danger, hesitated no longer. "I have satisfied myself,"¹ he wrote to Melville on March 29, 1804, "that the time is

¹ The facts concerning Pitt's accession to office in 1804 may be found in the 'Secret Correspondence . . . chiefly compiled from the MSS. at Melville Castle,' and edited by Lord Stanhope.

near at hand at which, if a change does not originate from the Ministers themselves, or from the King, I can no longer be justified in not publicly declaring my opinion, and endeavouring by Parliamentary measures to give it effect." He therefore proposed to write a letter to his Majesty, explaining the dangers which threatened "his people from the continuance of the present Government, and representing to him the urgent necessity of a speedy change." But Addington, deaf to persuasion, declined to retire, unless the confidence of the House were withdrawn from him; and the attacks of Pitt and Fox, who for the moment fought side by side, were redoubled.

Impeaching Addington's measures for the defence of the country, Pitt drew an eloquent contrast between the courage of the people and the pusillanimity

of the Ministers. "We have not been wanting in our exertions," said he proudly, "to contribute to call forth the spirit of the country and to organise its strength. That spirit and exertion, however, belong to the country, and are not to be ascribed to the direction or the energy of the Government." The Government, indeed, had less share than anything in the national energy. Of itself it had done nothing, thought nothing. "No one measure can they claim as their own," thus he proceeded with increased contempt, and with an intimate knowledge of Addington's dependence,—"no one measure have they improved and perfected; very many have they weakened by their delays and destroyed by their incongruities." And so condemning with all the vigour of his mind and tongue the tardiness, the languor, the imbecility of the Ministers, who

"boast of what others suggest, or what voluntary public zeal effects," he tore to pieces their policy of defence both by land and sea. This speech was delivered in April 23, 1804. A week later Addington had resigned. For three years he had held a position for which he was notoriously unfit, and into which he had been thrust by Pitt himself. But the ill-starred magnanimity which advanced him was rewarded with no gratitude, and Pitt deserved the heavy Nemesis which overtook him.

When Pitt returned to power, it was his purpose to establish his Government upon as broad a basis as possible. It was no longer a question of this Minister or that, but of the security of the Empire. The energy of Bonaparte had to be met with a corresponding energy. Nor was there any sound reason why all parties should not be united. The

most of the Whigs had renounced the heresy of Jacobinism, and Addington's supine policy had found few fiercer opponents than Fox. With the accession of Fox, Grenville, and the friends of both, Pitt's position would have been impregnable. A union of all the talents would have disarmed opposition, and have left England free to fight her battle to a happy issue. But once again the obstinacy of George III. involved the country in disaster. He declined, with unreasoning, if intelligible, fortitude, to accept Fox as a Minister; and he advanced, as before, the weighty argument of his own disease and a threatened regency.

For once Fox behaved with unselfish generosity, at least in public. "He wished it to appear as a record," said he, "and be known that he stood in the way of no arrangement; that he was

sure the King would exclude him ; but that they ought not on any account to prevent the Grenvilles from coming in, and that as far as his influence went it should not prevent his friends." In private he adopted another tone, which was more nearly consonant with his general policy. "Nothing could have fallen out more to his mind," he thought, "than what had happened ; the party revived and strengthened ; Pitt lowered." And straightway he set about the task of opposition with redoubled zeal.

But Fox, it may be said, was under no obligation to smooth the road for Pitt. Patriotism had never moved him, and for twenty years he had bitterly resented the success of his rival. The case of Lord Grenville was very different. When, for the sake of a new-formed friendship with Fox, his lifelong adversary, he refused to help Pitt, he was

guilty of a baseness rare even in the annals of political treachery, copious as they are. To Pitt he was bound by the ties of blood and sympathy. If gratitude had any weight, he owed a heavy debt to the man who had advanced and protected him. But for some years the Grenvilles had chafed against the supremacy of Pitt, and the chance of desertion was too strong to be resisted. This defection, however, did but confirm Pitt in his determination to form a Government. "I will teach that proud man," said he to Eldon of Grenville, "that in the service and with the confidence of the King I can do without him."

Thus the choice of his colleagues was circumscribed, and the ranks of the Opposition immensely strengthened. Henceforth it was his fate to contend not merely with Bonaparte, but with the

friends of Fox, Grenville, Windham, and the Prince. But Melville gave him what help he could, and Canning and Castlereagh were loyal in devotion. Instantly the war was carried on with renewed energy and courage, and nowhere was the change felt so speedily as in the navy. Within a year Lord Melville had added to the fleet 168 vessels, besides docking, repairing, and refitting 601. Thus England was enabled once again to meet her enemies on every sea, and to prepare for the crowning victory of Trafalgar. Nor was this all. Pitt, still faithful to his ancient tactics, made a last attempt at a coalition with Austria and Russia and Sweden. He received the most liberal promises in exchange for liberal subsidies, and his hopes were justly high. Malmesbury, whose experience in such matters was unrivalled, gave the Minister's scheme

his frank approval. "Never," said he, "was any measure, so far as human foresight can go, better combined or better negotiated." But human foresight does not go very far when it attempts to penetrate the plans of a Napoleon. On October 19, 1805, Mack signed his capitulation at Ulm, and though, two days later, Nelson assured the ultimate triumph of the British arms at Trafalgar, Pitt did not clearly understand that the victory by sea had rendered the victory by land of no effect. And hard upon Trafalgar came Austerlitz, a blow from which he never recovered.

The story of his last year is, indeed, a pitiful story of waning popularity and of disaster heaped upon disaster. The attack made upon Lord Melville was aimed at Pitt. A Commission of Naval Inquiry, appointed in 1802,

charged Melville, in its Tenth Report, with misapplying public funds. That Melville appropriated to his own use moneys which were not his own was not believed then, and is not believed now. But he had not kept a vigilant watch upon one Trotter, a paymaster in his department, and Trotter had taken advantage of Melville's carelessness. Tried by his peers, the First Lord of the Admiralty was unanimously acquitted, but the House of Commons did not take so lenient a view. The forces of the Opposition saw an excellent chance of striking at Pitt through his colleague, and they assailed Melville with a fine show of righteous anger. The Minister's services were forgotten in a moment. The reorganisation of the navy, which with Pitt's aid he had accomplished, had not a feather's weight in the scale. Whitbread, who

proposed the vote of censure, was supported by all the politicians who love to catch others tripping, who measure public servants not by the good they do but by the harm which they think they can detect.

The case was not unlike the case of Warren Hastings, and it was similarly misjudged. When Pitt had defended his friend, in whose innocence he firmly believed and whom loyalty would not permit him to desert; when Wilberforce, after much tribulation and in all the sincerity of an honest heart, had spoken against Melville, the House divided, the same number being found on either side. The Speaker threw his casting vote against Melville, and Pitt suffered a defeat that was worse in some respects than Ulm or Austerlitz. The First Lord was removed from his high office; his name was struck from the

list of Privy Councillors; and no doubt Whitbread and his friends thought that they had assisted at the triumph of justice.¹ But Melville's sin of carelessness, however great it might have been, did not merit so heavy a punishment, and, though the excuse of the genuine Opposition may have been legitimate, Addington and his friends gave their votes against Melville with a spice of joyous malice.

Meanwhile Pitt had been rapidly declining in popular favour. The jackals were upon him, as though they scented his coming death. He was assailed with that fury of hatred to which a patriotic

¹ Napoleon, whom nothing escaped, was not long in turning Melville's disgrace to good account. "Faites faire," thus he wrote to M. Barbé Marbois, May 2, 1805, "un petit pamphlet sur l'affaire Melville pour montrer l'immoralité de M. Pitt et du gouvernement Anglais. Un écrit bien frappé la rendra évidente à tout le monde, et l'immoralité des chefs n'est point indifférente pour leur crédit."

and single-minded Minister is too often exposed. The vote cast against Melville was too good a chance to be lost. When the numbers were announced, "Pitt immediately put on the little cocked hat that he was in the habit of wearing when dressed for the evening," thus Fitzharris tells the story, "and jammed it deeply over his forehead, and I distinctly saw the tears trickling down his cheeks. We had overheard one or two, such as Colonel Wardle (of notorious memory), say they would see 'how Billy looked after it.' A few young ardent followers of Pitt, with myself, locked their arms together and formed a circle, in which he moved, I believe unconsciously, out of the House; and neither the colonel nor his friends could approach him." The cowardice of Wardle and his friends was well matched by the party spirit of their leaders.

Fox could not receive the news even of Trafalgar without a qualm. "It is a great event," he told Lord Holland, "and by its solid as well as brilliant advantages far more than compensates for the temporary succour which it will certainly afford to Pitt in his distress." And as the man is always more violent than the master, Creevey's comment outdoes Fox's in partisan malignity. He says little of the victory, but asks in anguish: "What will it do? Not, I hope, save Pitt." It did not save Pitt. He was already dying. It saved only England, which, one imagines, was of little profit either to Fox or to Creevey.

Pitt knew but one return of his ancient glory. On Lord Mayor's Day, which followed hot upon the news of Trafalgar, he dined at the Mansion House. His journey thither was a triumphal pro-

gress. The horses were taken from his carriage by the mob, and he was received on all sides with acclamation. Austerlitz had not yet been fought; his spirit was still buoyant; and the Duke of Wellington notes that "he did not seem ill." The Lord Mayor proposed his health as one "who had been the Saviour of England, and who would be the Saviour of Europe." Pitt's reply must be given in full, for it is the lesson of his life: "I return you many thanks for the honour you have done me; but Europe is not to be saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, I trust, save Europe by her example." Such were the last words which Pitt spoke to the people; such was his swan-song, sung, as life began to ebb, and sung not in vain.

A few weeks later Pitt went in search of health to Bath. Then came the news of Austerlitz, and "his reflections were so painful that the gout was repelled and attacked some vital organ." Still loyal to his high office, he left Bath early in January that he might attend the opening of Parliament. On the 12th he reached Putney. A few days later he had his last interview with Wellesley, to whom "his spirits appeared to be as high as he had ever seen them, and his understanding quite as vigorous and clear." Then it was that Pitt gave his famous opinion of Wellington. "I never met any military officer," said he, "with whom it was so satisfactory to converse. He states every difficulty before he undertakes any service, but none after he has undertaken it."

But Pitt's cheerfulness did not deceive Wellesley, who saw that "the hand of death was fixed" upon his friend. No sooner did he return to London than he warned Lord Grenville of Pitt's approaching death. "He received the fatal intelligence," wrote Wellesley, "with the utmost feeling,¹ in an agony of tears, and immediately determined that all hostility in Parliament should be suspended."

There was, in truth, no need of hostility, for Pitt was dying fast. On the night of January 22 he "frequently inquired the direction of the wind; then said, answering himself, 'East; ah! that

¹ This "feeling" did not last long. "I never was more disgusted," wrote the first Earl Dudley to Mrs Dugald Stewart after Pitt's death, "than by the savage exultation of some part of the Grenville family at an event which no difference in politics ought to have prevented them from deploring. Don't mention me as having said this, though the fact is notorious enough."

will do ; that will bring him quick.' ” A few hours later James Stanhope, who watched by his side, “feared he was dying ; but shortly afterwards, with much clearer voice than he spoke in before, and in a tone I never shall forget, he exclaimed, ‘Oh, my country ! how I leave my country !’ From that time he never spoke or moved, and at half-past four expired without a groan or struggle. His strength being quite exhausted, his life departed like a candle burning out.”

Of all the tributes which grief paid to the dead statesman, none was more sincere or more poignantly felt than Canning’s. “But five hours dead !” he wrote on a torn scrap of paper, “nay, not five, not so much ! and to be mentioned merely as a fact. Alas !” And it was the same faithful hand that com-

posed the inscription which commemorates for ever the lofty unselfishness of William Pitt: "Dispensing for near twenty years the favours of the Crown, he lived without ostentation, and he died poor."

CHAPTER VII.

THE STATESMAN AND THE MAN.

WAS there ever a man, with the single exception of James Wolfe, whose aspect more loudly belied his character and achievement than William Pitt's? The elevation and dignity, characteristic of his mind, did not shine in his face. While his chin receded, his forehead was not ample, and his nose, thrust into the air, suggested a pertness which was wholly alien to him. "It was not till his eye," says Wraxall, "lent animation to his other features, which were in themselves tame, that they lighted up

and became strongly intelligent." The brilliance of his eye, in fact, struck terror into his opponents and appalled his friends. Erskine's career in Parliament was checked by the ascendancy which Pitt held over him with a glance.¹ When Wilberforce dared to throw the weight of his austerity into the scale against Melville, he looked across at his leader with conscious fear. "It required no little effort," he confessed, "to resist the fascination of that penetrating eye."

¹ Never did Pitt more clearly prove his influence over Erskine than at the Mansion House on November 9, 1805. "At this dinner," the Duke of Wellington, who was present, told Stanhope, "Erskine's health being drunk, and Erskine rising to return thanks, Pitt held up his finger, and said to him across the table, 'Erskine! remember that they are drinking your health as a distinguished Colonel of Volunteers.' Erskine, who had intended, as we heard, to go off upon the Rights of Juries, the State Trials, and other political points, was quite put out; he was awed like a schoolboy at school, and in his speech kept strictly within the limits enjoined him."

Nor were his gesture and bearing more distinguished than his features, if we may believe the testimony of eye-witnesses. It is thus that he appeared to Chateaubriand: "Mr Pitt, in a black coat, with a steel-hilted sword at his side and a black hat under his arm, went upstairs taking two or three steps at a time. On his way he found no more than three or four aimless emigrants, upon whom he threw a contemptuous glance, and passed on, his nose in the air, his face pale." Wraxall, with a coincidence in which there is no design, draws a similar picture. "From the moment that Pitt entered the doorway of the House of Commons," he says, "he advanced up the floor with a quick and firm step, his head erect and thrown back, looking neither to the right nor to the left, nor favouring with a nod or glance any of the individuals seated

on either side, among whom many . . . would have been gratified even by so slight a mark of attention."

It is evident, therefore, that he did not present himself to the world in a picturesque guise. There was no touch in his nature of his father's flamboyancy. Chatham lived in an atmosphere of grandeur. In every tone of his voice, in every movement of his hand, "the great man" was conspicuous. The slightest word that he said or wrote bore the impress of his character. He never forgot the effect which he wished to produce, and Walpole did him no injustice when he compared him with Garrick. Pitt, on the other hand, was incapable of pose or grimace. He came before his fellows with a studied, if absorbed, simplicity. He was either completely conscious of himself, or he was not self-conscious at all. He

was free from the engaging, if dangerous, talent of the histrion, which has given to many a mediocre politician the appearance of an eminent statesman. And as he differed from his father in demeanour, so he differed from him in eloquence. Though perfectly versed in the art of speaking, he was not a rhetorician. As in life, so in the House he preferred a quiet style and modest effects.

While, in an age of eloquence, Fox and Pitt stood high above their contemporaries, nothing could have been more widely different than their methods of persuasion. Fox's orotund voice and ample manner found no counterpart in Pitt. But if Pitt had not the qualities which made Fox so dangerous an opponent, if he could not stir his audience by the "Good God, sirs!" and the other invocations to the Deity, by which you

may track Fox's orations through the maze of Hansard, he possessed other and no less conspicuous merits. He aimed always at conviction rather than at ornament. His style was plain in its neatness. Clear in tone, lucid in thought, his speeches were economical in diction without being parsimonious. If Fox's oratory was impassioned, Pitt's was correct, and this distinction was appropriate to the part which each played in the House. While it was Fox's duty to lead a fierce attack, to Pitt fell the sterner tasks of exposition and defence. Or as Wraxall puts it in a sentence: "The one exhibited all the tribunitian rage, the other displayed the consular dignity."

And as their aims were different, they expressed them by a corresponding difference of movement. To Fox tranquillity was impossible. He flung

himself about without measure or moderation ; while Pitt, spare in body, was spare also in the motion of his hands. In brief, his characteristics were clarity and restraint. His voice, says Croker, was "like a silver bell," and the simple directness of his style gave a dignity to his simplest utterance. Now, the vice which corresponds to the quality of restraint is dryness, and as Pitt receded further and further from Chatham's influence, his oratory became drier and more uniform. "There was much light and shade in my father's speeches," he once said, as if conscious that his own were not thus pleasantly diversified.

To Windham Pitt "always seemed as if he could make a King's speech offhand," and Windham did not mean to pay a compliment. But Wilberforce, the friendliest of critics, also noted in Pitt's oratory the same mediocrity of

sentiment, the same lack of ornament, which you might expect in a King's speech. And he attributed it to "the necessity, under which Pitt often lay, of opening and speaking upon subjects of a low and vulgarising quality, such as the excise on tobacco, wine, &c., topics almost incapable of an association with wit and grace." Wilberforce's explanation is not complete. It was said of Swift by Stella that he could write well about a broomstick. And if Pitt had possessed the Dean's temperament, he would have spoken eloquently upon tobacco. But ornament was in general distasteful to him. He thought it justified only upon rare occasions. He spoke not to dazzle but inform, and the most of his speeches were sternly adapted to serve a practical end.¹

¹ Partisans would allow no merit to Pitt's oratory. Dr Parr, the sturdiest and most arrogant of Whigs,

From this point of view they are beyond praise. He could arrange his facts and marshal his arguments with a skill unrivalled. Never for a moment did he lose the thread of his discourse, and he arrived with inexorable logic and without effort at an irresistible conclusion. He had no need to resume or to repeat—those artifices of the confused rhetorician were useless to him. Above all, he spoke as one who was more fluent with the tongue than with the pen. His

humorously denied him a respect for the English tongue. "Parr told us," wrote Lord Holland, "that he suspected Pitt of a settled design of subverting the idiom of the language, as well as overturning the constitution. 'The dog talks grammar,' he said, 'but it is an insidious masked battery under which he may better assail our idiom.' Then he would relate how he had sat in the gallery of the House of Commons and thrown his 'whole grammatical mind' upon the orator, a process which he acted with most significant gestures, and then added, 'the dog caught my eye, and chastised his faulty phraseology.'" See 'Further Memoirs of the Whig Party,' p. 330.

speeches were not essays scrupulously committed to memory, but genuine orations which arose out of the immediate circumstances, and which were designed for a particular audience.

It was his habit, says Wilberforce, "to form the plan of a speech in his mind while the debate was going forward, and to distribute his comments on the various statements and remarks of his opponents according to the arrangement he had made." And in the possession of one gift he did not yield to any of his contemporaries. He could not boast the coloured imagery of Burke or the lambent wit of Sheridan, but he was a perfect master of apt quotation. A sedulous study of the classics and a marvellous memory had made Virgil and Horace and Cicero his own, and they were all three ready to illustrate his argument and to embellish his speech.

Though he was persuaded by temperament and circumstance to rest upon a lower plane, there were times at which he winged a lofty flight. There are speeches on the war, some denunciations of Jacobinism, a defence of the Union, which will hold their own in any company. But by common consent his masterpiece was an oration on the Slave Trade, delivered on April 2, 1792. Even in the bald report which remains to us there glimmers the genius of oratory. Here Pitt is measured not by the standards of his own day, but of all time. He is the equal of Cicero and Demosthenes. With a happy ingenuity he turned upon England all the circumstances which degraded Africa. "Why might not some Roman senator," said he, "reasoning on these principles, and pointing to British barbarians, have predicted with equal boldness: 'There is a people that will

never rise to civilisation; there is a people destined never to be free; a people without the understanding necessary for the attainment of useful arts; depressed by the hand of nature below the level of the human species; and created to form a supply of slaves for the rest of the world'? Might not this have been said in all respects as fairly and truly of Britain herself at that period of her history as it can now be said by us of the inhabitants of Africa? We, sir, have long since emerged from barbarism; we have almost forgotten that we were once barbarians; we are now raised to a situation which exhibits a striking contrast to every circumstance by which a Roman might have characterised us, and by which we now characterise Africa."

And then with a passion of unjustified hope he looked to the future: "If we listen to the voice of reason and duty,"

he exclaimed, "and pursue the line of conduct which they prescribe, some of us may live to see a reverse of that picture, from which we now turn our eyes with shame and regret. We may live to behold the natives of Africa engaged in the calm occupations of industry, in the pursuits of a just and legitimate commerce. We may behold the beams of science and philosophy breaking in upon their land, which at some happy period in still later times may blaze with full lustre, and, joining their influence to that of pure religion, may illuminate and invigorate the most distant extremities of that immense continent. Then may we hope that even Africa, though last of all the quarters of the globe, shall enjoy at length in the evening of her days those blessings which have descended so plentifully upon us in a much earlier period of the world. Then also will Europe,

participating in her improvement and prosperity, receive an ample recompense for the tardy kindness, if kindness it can be called, of no longer hindering that continent from extricating herself out of the darkness, which in other more fortunate regions has been so much more speedily dispelled.

“*Nos primus equis oriens afflavit anhelis ;
Illic sera rubens ascendit lumina Vesper.*”

No speech that he ever made had the same influence upon his audience as this. And fortune favoured his eloquence. He spoke late, and as he quoted the Latin lines the risen sun blazed through the windows of the House. The theatrical effect, which would have delighted his father, moved the least sympathetic of his hearers to admiration. “Windham,” said Wilberforce, “who has no love for Pitt, tells

me that Fox and Grey, with whom he walked home after the debate, agreed with him in thinking Pitt's speech one of the most extraordinary displays of eloquence they had ever heard. For the last twenty minutes he really seemed to be inspired."

But he was not often thus inspired. Though now and again he shook a loose rein to his fancy, he valued action more highly than speech, and he believed that it was his duty to speak only when the Government of the country imposed it. In other words, he placed statesmanship before oratory. He might, indeed, after an older fashion, be called "the complete statesman." Men said he was avid of power, but no one ever loved power less for its own sake. The strongest feeling which animated his mind and heart was patriotism, and, being a patriot, and, believing that he

alone could save the country, he was unwilling to relinquish the seals of office.

But, having won the trust of his fellows, he did not spare himself. He wore himself out in the service of England. When, in 1797, he was the victim of ill-health, he was but enduring the natural consequences of an arduous profession. "Mr Pitt," said Rose, who knew him intimately, "sacrificed his life as much as Lord Nelson did." That does not go beyond the truth. Throughout his career Pitt proved that he had no interest save in the welfare of his country. He sought no reward of money or title. The ribbons and sinecures for which other Ministers have worked and prayed, had no attraction for him. The ambition, if ambition it were, which made him seek after office, sprang neither from greed nor vanity. He did what

he thought he alone could do, and was sufficiently repaid by the security of the country.

But the good intentions, implied by patriotism and self-sacrifice, would not have enabled Pitt to save the country, had he not mastered all the arts of government. A natural aptitude, fortified by the habit of years, had given him an unquestioned control over men and affairs. To a quickness of conception he added an extraordinary promptitude in decision, and when once he had formed a resolution he lost no time in carrying it into effect. In other words, thought and action were with him separated only by a short interval. If he discovered that ships were lacking to the navy, he did not deplore the deficiency; he set about making it good. If he discovered seditious persons, red-handed in revolt, he

suspended the Habeas Corpus Act with as few words as possible.

The epithet which best describes his statesmanship is practical. The measures which he passed were always opportune ; the steps which he took in defence of the country were always appropriate. Though the ingenuity of his opponents found many a theoretical objection to his policy, in most cases the practical result justified Pitt's sagacity. It is easy enough, in the name of principle, to shirk the common duties of life. This was not Pitt's method. He even surrendered his principles, those last strongholds of pride, to the exigence of government. And so it was that he was no blind worshipper of consistency. "That man," said he, "who talks of his consistency merely because he holds the same opinion for ten or fifteen years, when the circumstances under which it was

originally formed are totally changed, is a slave to the most idle vanity."

This sternly practical sense persuaded him also to reject no instrument that might prove useful to him. No Minister has ever employed spies on so vast a scale or to so good a purpose. The man who brought him valuable information never went empty away. He had learned from his father the power of knowledge, and he had improved upon the lesson. And this determination to know opened his mind to the persuasion of others. "I do not believe," said Wilberforce, "that there is a single professional man, or the head of any board who ever did business with him, who would not acknowledge that he was on these occasions the most easy and accommodable man with whom they ever carried on official intercourse.' Though, when he had formed

a scheme, he bent his mind upon it with an intense enthusiasm, he would renounce it "with the most unruffled good-humour, without attempting to hang by it, or to devise methods of propping it up," if he were once convinced of its impracticability.

His vigilance and courage in the service of the state were affected neither by disaster nor ill-health. So sanguine was his temper, as all his friends confess, that he would not believe the miscarriage of his schemes possible, nor would he accept the news of defeat without irrefragable confirmation. This sanguine temper was, indeed, at once a stumbling-block and a support. On the one hand, it induced him to form such designs as the Third Coalition, of whose futility a long experience might have convinced him. On the other hand, it saved him from despair,

even when the outlook was blackest, and left his energies free to carry out his projects of defence. Even at the last, it was his frail body, not his unconquerable spirit, which succumbed to the news of Austerlitz.

He controlled himself with the same strong hand wherewith he controlled others. Impetuous by nature, he had learnt to hide both joy and sorrow behind a mask of impassivity. There was a certain aloofness in his demeanour, which neither invited approach nor encouraged familiarity. But this separation from his fellows was not merely the result of pride, though pride was there; it came also from a certain awkwardness. "He was," says Wilberforce, "one of the shyest men that I ever knew." It was for these reasons, no doubt, that his enemies detected in him an ignorance of human

nature. He had little or no sympathy, said they, with the world outside. The charge, unlike most charges brought against him, contains a grain of truth. With the democracy he may have had an imperfect acquaintance. It came not within the scope of his mind or vision. But of the men with whom he had to deal—Ministers, political opponents, England's enemies, the rulers of provinces—he had a perfect knowledge.

Of those his governance was unquestioned; he controlled them with a word or glance; he made their acts his; at the same time, he left to his colleagues a wide freedom in matters which did not appear to him of the highest importance. Bankes and Wilberforce—to name but two examples—differed from him on more than one occasion without imperilling their alleg-

iance or losing his friendship. This generous trait is pleasantly illustrated in a letter written by Lord Ashburton to Croker on April 7, 1844. "I always thought our friend," he says, speaking of Peel, "too severe in his notions of party obedience. Pitt and some other great men left a greater licence for caprice in non-essentials for persons out of office, and, as old Hunt said of Manners-Sutton as Speaker, he drove them in a snaffle." Pitt never drove his supporters in a snaffle, and the result was that, except on one or two occasions, he might always rely upon their freely given support.

There is one reproach hurled at Pitt which few statesmen have escaped. It was imputed to him that "he was wanting in simplicity and frankness," that "the answers which he made to questions put to him concerning his future con-

duct or the principles which were regulating the course of measures he pursued" were vague and contradictory. Wilberforce, who notes the charge, has no difficulty in refuting it. If Pitt ever seemed to be wanting in frankness, it was "a direct consequence of that very strictness and veracity for which he was so remarkable." So scrupulous was he of truth that he could not deal in blunt statements or unqualified negations. His subtle brain saw the shades and gradations which qualify or vary truth, and he was too simple and too frank to commit himself to the violent assertions which in politics too often pass for honesty.¹

Keeping always before him an ideal of practical statesmanship, devoted with

¹ For this delicate appreciation of Pitt's temperament the reader may consult 'The Private Papers of William Wilberforce,' p. 70.

a perfect concentration of mind to the achievement of a definite task, Pitt cannot be claimed by this side or that. He was neither Whig nor Tory. He was an Englishman and an anti-Jacobin. That he was inclined towards liberal opinions is evident from his sympathy with reform and his candid acknowledgment of the Catholic claims. But lack of opportunity led him to reject the one and to postpone the other, and the fact that the Whigs of his day were inspired by a hatred of their own land made his alliance with the Tories inevitable. In truth, however, he stood high above the conflict of parties, and he was far more willing to accept the aid of his opponents than they were to grant it. Upon one thing only was he determined: he would not impair his freedom of action by the worship of any fetish, and in this respect he

resembled and transcends the other great creative statesmen of our land—Bolingbroke, Chatham, Canning, and Disraeli.

But there is another trait in Pitt's character which his enemies could not forget or forgive. He lived in a metaphysical age, and he did not confuse the craft of government with metaphysics. There exists a sketch of Pitt, the joint production of Coleridge and Hazlitt, which reveals, in its own despite, the strength and restraint of the great Minister. These two philosophers complain that Pitt has not left behind him "a single memorable saying—not one profound maxim—one solid observation—one forcible description—one beautiful thought—one humorous picture—one affecting sentiment." They declare that "he made no addition whatever to the stock of human knowledge."

Even if this were true, it would convey no reproach to Pitt. It was not his business to increase the stock of human knowledge, but to govern the empire. It is not of a statesman that we should demand "humorous pictures" or "affecting sentiments." And Coleridge and Hazlitt plainly showed the bias of their mind. They regarded him exclusively from the literary point of view. They pondered his speeches, and they found in them no general ideas, no vague platitudes, no jingling phrases, no cheaply made epigrams. And so confounding a facile management of words with policy, they contrasted him to his discredit with the leaders of the Whigs. But they overlooked, in their anxiety to belittle a great man, the true purpose of government. In their eyes it seemed Pitt's disgrace that "his talents were exactly fitted for the

situation in which he was placed." Missing in his speeches the "high-wrought imagination" of Burke, the "vehemence" of Fox, the "ease, brilliancy, and acuteness" of Sheridan, they argued erroneously that he was deficient in the qualities of true statesmanship, whereas his modesty of speech proved his capacity. Fox and Burke and Sheridan could beguile an audience more cunningly than any of their contemporaries. But had they been placed at the head of the state in a time of danger, all their exquisite verbosity would not have helped them to save the country.

Pitt, on the other hand, was a man of action. Words were his servants, not his masters. He used them when they helped him to gain his end; he did not submit to their domination in idle vanity. And he was acutely conscious of the limits which Coleridge deplored, and

which he deliberately imposed upon himself. He refrained from "general ideas" not because they were beyond his reach, but because they were not to his purpose. What the philosophers deemed his weakness was, in very truth, his strength. His mind preferred induction to deduction. "The merit of the British Constitution," said he in a characteristic phrase, "is to be estimated not by metaphysical ideas, not by vague theories, but by analysing it in practice." That Coleridge should have thus misunderstood the genius of Pitt is not surprising. He lived in a dreamland of speculation, and at the outset was more than half a Jacobin. But Hazlitt, despite his Jacobinism, knew the prize-ring and the tennis-court, and he might have remembered that statesmanship, like sport, has more need of deeds than of words.

Still more bitterly did the ardent Whigs reproach Pitt with lack of imagination. The injustice of this reproach is obvious. In constructive imagination he excelled the most of his contemporaries. Few Ministers have understood the large effect of their measures as clearly as Pitt. It was not by accident that he won the mastery of the sea, and thus turned a wasting war to the profit of the state. When his opponents, to whom Coleridge willingly attributed the gift of imagination, saw no motive in the victories gloriously won by our ships, Pitt's mind looked far into the future. He knew that his achievement had answered its design, and, with a prescience which is appreciated to-day, acclaimed the splendid purpose of the navy.

"In the wreck of the Continent," said he, answering Grey in January

1801, "and the disappointment of our hopes there, what has been the security of this country but its naval preponderance? And if that were once gone, the spirit of the nation would go with it. If we had no other guide but the experience of the present war, that alone proves not the utility but the necessity of maintaining a principle so important to the power, and even to the existence, of this country." Here, then, is an imagination expressed not in the apt metaphor and coloured phrase which appealed to Coleridge and Hazlitt, but in the perfection of vast designs, which, if they escaped the poet's eye, were revealed with all their force and meaning to the keener sight of the statesman.

There remains another charge, universally brought against Pitt, that may easily be refuted. Macaulay complains, and many others have echoed his

complaint, that Pitt treated men of letters with contempt. For this charge there is no excuse save prejudice. An excellent scholar, Pitt professed a keen interest also in modern literature, but it was not his business to support or to reward the writers of books. A Prime Minister is not a maid-of-all-work. In times of stress—and Pitt lived in a time of stress—he has other duties to perform than to succour indigent genius. And even if he had leisure for so difficult a pursuit, he is wise to neglect it. Literature, more honourably democratic than politics, needs not the encouragement of statesmen, who, for their part, are rarely suited by nature and temperament for the delicate task of patronage. If in their leisure they are able to welcome the triumphs of literature, so much the better for them; but as we cannot give

them credit for what lies beyond their sphere, so we cannot blame if they neglect what obviously is not their duty. Henry VIII. was happy, no doubt, in the appreciation of Holbein's works, but the patronage of that painter did not add a single leaf to his kingly crown.

But, while Macaulay is wrong in the principle which he enunciates, he is doubly wrong in its application. Rash enough to give examples of what he deems Pitt's delinquency, he completely proves the insufficiency of his charge. "The greatest historian of his age," says he of Gibbon, "forced by poverty to leave his country, completed his immortal work on the shores of Lake Lemman." The reproach conveyed by this inaccurate statement is instantly dissipated by a knowledge of the facts. Gibbon was never driven by poverty

one inch from the course of his dignified industrious life. "The gratification of my desires (they were not immoderate)"—thus he wrote in his *Memoirs*—"has seldom been disappointed by the want of money or credit; my pride was never insulted by the visit of an importunate tradesman; and my transient anxiety for the past or future has been dispelled by the studious or social occupation of the present hour." He completed his immortal work at Lausanne because he "had always cherished a secret wish that the school of his youth might become the retreat of his declining age." How then was Pitt to blame for an honourable choice which Gibbon made of his own free will? While the historian was too proud to accept alms, the Minister was wise enough not to intrude upon another's privacy, and it is obvious that Pitt

could in no way have assisted at the composition of 'The Decline and Fall.'

Another example chosen by Macaulay is no happier. "Scarcely had Pitt obtained possession of unbounded power," says he, "when an aged writer of the highest eminence . . . wanted five or six hundred pounds to enable him, during the winter or two which might still remain to him, to draw his breath more easily in the soft climate of Italy." To blame a young Minister, who, so far from being in the "possession of unbounded power," had held office but a few months, and who had for the greater part of the time been opposed by a solid majority, for not giving a grant to Samuel Johnson, is the last extravagance of prejudice. It is true that an application for money was made on Johnson's behalf through Lord Thurlow, and was refused. But in the first place,

Johnson was already receiving a pension ; and in the second place, had he chosen to visit Italy, he was well able to defray the expenses of the journey. Nor, if the journey had been necessary, would Johnson have been compelled to undertake it at his own charges. Thurlow was ready, if the Doctor "granted a mortgage of his pension," to advance him six hundred pounds. But Johnson had no mind to travel. "If I grew much better," said he, "I should not be willing, if much worse, not able, to migrate." At any rate, he suffered no hardship, and Pitt's conduct of the affair does not for an instant warrant the charge of "contempt" which Macaulay brings against him. But the Whigs were as frivolous as they were spiteful when they spoke or wrote of Pitt, and hitherto the history of England has been their special province.

In private, as in public, Pitt has been pursued by the prejudice of his opponents. The reticence and dignity of his demeanour have been taken as proofs of a malicious temper. It is true that to strangers, as to the House of Commons, Pitt appeared proud and inaccessible. He did not reveal his emotions to the first-comer; he was never plausible; friendship was easier to him than acquaintance. When Wilberforce said that he made no friends, he meant no more than that he was content to enjoy the society of those whose adoption he had tried. But there is no truth in the assertion commonly made that Pitt was a solitary egoist who had no interest in his fellows. "In all places," writes Mornington, "and at all times,¹ his constant delight was

¹ This eloquent tribute to Pitt was first published in 'The Quarterly Review,' vol. 57.

society. There he shone with a degree of calm and steady lustre which often astonished me more than his most splendid efforts in Parliament. His manners were perfectly plain, without any affectation: not only was he without presumption or arrogance, or any air of authority, but he seemed utterly unconscious of his own superiority, and much more disposed to listen than to talk. He never betrayed any symptom of anxiety to usurp the lead or to display his own powers, but rather inclined to draw for others, and to take merely an equal share in the general conversation; then, he plunged heedlessly into the mirth of the hour, with no other care than to promote the general good-humour and happiness of the company. His wit was quick and ready, but it was rather lively than sharp, and never envenomed with the

least taint of malignity ; so that instead of exciting admiration or terror, it was an additional ingredient in the common enjoyment. He was endowed, beyond any man of his time whom I knew, with a gay heart and a social spirit. With these qualities he was the life and soul of his own society : his appearance dispelled all care ; his brow was never clouded, even in the severest public trials ; and joy, and hope, and confidence beamed from his countenance in every crisis of difficulty and danger."

This picture, drawn by the hand of an intimate, is not the picture of a churl, and Mornington's testimony is supported by a hundred others. Nor was Pitt merely gay in society ; he could at times be even boisterous. Like many great men, he had in his nature something of the child, and

Sir William Napier tells us that, when he was a boy, he helped the Stanhopes to blacken Pitt's face with burnt cork. At the very moment that Pitt was beating off his assailants with a cushion, Lord Castlereagh and Lord Liverpool were announced. The Minister washed his face; all signs of the conflict were removed; and Napier was astonished at the change in Pitt's aspect. "His tall, ungainly, bony figure seemed to grow to the ceiling, his head was thrown back, his eyes were fixed immovably;" and then, having dismissed his colleagues, he turned with a laugh, "caught up his cushions, and renewed our fight."

Such, among his intimates, was the man who has been represented as the bitter enemy of the human race. And while his friends agree in applauding his gaiety of heart, they agree also in attributing to him a rare amiability.

"In an intercourse almost uninterrupted during more than twenty years," writes Rose, "I never saw him once out of temper, nor did ever one unpleasant sentence pass between us." To Wilberforce Pitt was devoted throughout his life, while Bankes, Arden, and Wellesley received at his hands nothing save kindness. But of all his friends, the one in whose society he took the greatest pleasure was George Canning, whom he regarded almost as a son, and wholly as a successor. When Canning was married, Pitt "was so nervous that he could not sign as witness, and Canning whispered to Frere to sign without waiting for him." This is not the sign of a cold nature, though it may be admitted that he reserved an affection for Canning which he showed to few others. The truth is, he repressed his emotions, for years he kept aloof

from all other worlds than that of his own intimates, because he believed that he could in this manner better dedicate himself to the service of his country. But it is impossible to consider his career without realising the warmth of his heart and the sincerity of his affections.

Such leisure as he was able to snatch from the cares of government he devoted to literature. A finished scholar, as has been said, he never lost his taste for Latin and Greek. Canning and he spent the evenings at Holwood in reading classics, and a casual visitor to Walmer was astonished at the aptness and accuracy wherewith he quoted Lucan. The arduous duties of his high office prevented him from the practice of literature, and a few specimens which we have of his writing suggest that oratory was more congenial to him than literature. It is difficult, indeed, to

imagine any style less expressive than the style of his letters. Written at intervals snatched from graver duties, they represent neither the thought nor the feeling of the man. When the news of Austerlitz had shattered his health beyond recovery, he could describe the victory of Napoleon as "provoking." And it would be difficult to find in the English dictionary a less appropriate, less sensitive epithet.

His enemies were wont to make merry over his virtuous life, — "as if," says Wraxall, "it had been necessary that the first Minister of George III. should be, like the Chancellor of Charles II., the greatest libertine in his dominions." And then, having exhausted their malevolent wit thus inappositely, they fell to exaggerating Pitt's love of conviviality. It is true that, in obedience to a doctor, Pitt had from his early youth

drunk more port than was common even at the end of the eighteenth century. The disease which killed him at the age of forty-six was kept at bay by alcohol. But only once was he seen in the House of Commons with his mind so clouded by wine that he could not conduct the debate.¹ Yet there is one vice which he inherited from his father—the vice of extravagance. Able as he was in finance, he was powerless to control his household. Of him it might be said with perfect truth that he was *alieni appetens, sui profugus*. His friends did all that prudence and generosity could suggest to set his affairs in order, but without avail. While Pitt declined to accept the

¹ His opponents made the best of the chance which this accident gave them. It inspired Porson to the composition of a hundred epigrams. But the best is by another hand :—

“ *Pitt*. I cannot see the Speaker ! Hal, can you ?
Dundas. Not see the Speaker ! Hang it, I see two.”

gifts freely offered by the King or by the City, he could not, in the stress of affairs, set his house in order. The Minister who controlled the fate of Europe was more than once threatened with executions and other legal processes. And it is satisfactory to think that after his death the House of Commons unanimously voted the sum which, while alive, he sedulously declined.

But these are slight blemishes upon a noble career of courage and devotion. Born to an inheritance of patriotism, trained in a great school of statesmanship, Pitt lived and died the loyal servant of his country. If the security of England were at stake, he shrank from no sacrifice, he deemed no toil excessive. Like all heroes, he fought the battle alone, and alone enjoyed the fruits of victory. As he could place but slight dependence upon friends, so

he was indifferent to the insolence of his enemies. In the days of his fiercest conflict he saw himself deserted by colleagues, and attacked with all the fury of success by exulting opponents. But he neither wavered in his purpose nor changed his policy a jot. Perhaps the one man in Europe who understood his solitary grandeur was Napoleon. "Ah!" said the Emperor, "if I had such an instrument, I should not be afraid of the Chambers." And Napoleon understood him, because he faced him and fought him. Nor was Pitt's career incomplete, because his purpose was not achieved. Though he died with the gloom of Austerlitz upon him, he saw clearly the ultimate end of the war. "Roll up the map of Europe," said he when he returned home for the last time in 1806; "it will not be wanted for ten years." And not for ten years did the battle of Waterloo,

which his genius had prepared and which his wisdom foresaw, restore to England and to Europe the honourable peace to gain which all his battles, by land and by sea, had been fought.

THE END.

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